Of The Day of Grace:

OR, A

DISCOURSE

Concerning

The *Possibility*, and *Fear* of its being *Past*, before *Death.*

SHEWING

The groundless *Doubts*, and mistaken *Apprehensions* of *Some*, as to their being *finally Forsaken, and left of God.* With the *Dangerous Symptoms* and *Approaches* of *Others* to such a sad *State.*

In Four SERMONS

From *Psalm* LXXXI. 11, 12.

By *JOHN SHOWER.*

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TO THE
READER.

THe following Sermons were preacht at the Earneſt Deſire of an unknown Perſon ſent me in a Letter, expreſſing a more than ordinary Concern and Fear, leſt the day of Grace ſhould be paſt, and the Holy Spirit finally departed, ſo as to Return and Strive no more. Many Upright Chriſtians after aggravated Backſidings, or under Great Temptations, or in deep Melancholy are apt to conclude thus hardly of themſelves. Such as theſe I have endeavour'd to Convince, that this is not the State of their Caſe, or ever like to be.

I have alſo ſhown, who have reaſon to Apprehend themſelves in Danger of this Judgment in the Text. For 'tis poſſible, and more than poſſible, that after long Reſiſtance and Obſtinacy, God may Judicially let Men Alone, and give 'em over. Though their Lives be prolonged, they may be ſealed up to Wrath, and reſerved to Judgment. Four Generations filled the Meaſure of the Amorites Sin, though five paſt before they were deſtroyed. And though Pharoah's

time

time expir'd, 'tis thought, at the Sixth Plague, *God upheld and harden'd him, (principally by ſuffering him to harden himſelf) till the* Tenth *was paſt. The ſins of* Jeruſalem *and the* Jewiſh Nation *were full at the Murder of the* Meſſiah, *but they were not deſtroyed till* forty years *after.*

I muſt Confeſs, that we cannot tell poſitively when this is true concerning any particular Perſon: Nor is any man bound to believe it concerning Himſelf; *but is* alway *obliged to believe, that if he do truly Repent, he ſhall find Mercy. For though* God *may preſcribe Limits to his own Grace,* we *ought not to bound it. Shall any man ſay, Divine Patience hath waited on me, (or on ſuch a one ſo long,) it* can *wait* no longer. *Such* Deſpair *of Grace, while in the uſe of God's Appointed Means, is very* Inſolent Preſumption. *You are obliged, (as a Thing highly grateful to him)* to Hope in his Mercy.

In ſhort, whatever your Doubts and Fears are, if you firmly purpoſe to go on in the Way which leads to Life: if you will not turn aſide from following the Lord; if you Reſolve, Come what will of it, I will never give over praying, ſeeking, ſtriving, wreſtling, &c. Let him do what he will with me, I'le not deſiſt; I'le run after him.

him, I'le fly to him, I'le call upon him, as long as I live, &c. *A Blessing from the Author and Purchaser of all Grace may be undoubtedly expected by such a one.* Prov. 8. 34. 'Blessed is the man that hear-'eth me, watching daily at my Gates, 'waiting at the Posts of my Doors. For 'whoso findeth me, findeth Life.

'If you hear him, and wait,* (saith 'Dr. O.) though you have not yet Ad-'mission, but are kept at the Gates and 'Posts of the Doors, yet in the Issue you 'shall be Blessed. The rule in this Case is, '*Hos. 6. 3. Then shall we know, if we 'follow on to know.* Are you in the 'way of knowing Christ in the use of 'means, hearing the Word, and Sin-'cere Endeavors in Holy Duties; 'though you cannot yet attain unto any 'Evidence, that you have received him, 'have closed with him, (*nay tho you 'question whether ever he will Receive 'you,*) *Nothing can Ruine you but 'giving over the way wherein you are*; 'for then shall you know, if you fol-'low on to know the Lord.

Dr. O. Meditations and Discourses of the Glory of Christ, applyed to Unconverted Sinners, 8° p. 18.

These

To the Reader.

These Discourses are printed almost verbatim *as preacht; which I hope will rather promote, than lessen their Usefulness unto Such, who are most like to read* 'em, *and to whose Case they are most suited. The Day of Reckoning is near; Death and Judgment are at hand: May I then find mercy of the Lord! Give an Account of my Stewardship with Comfort! And be found in Christ to the Glory of God. Beg it for me; as I do and shall thy profiting by this, and all the many other Helps to further thy Salvation.*

J. S.

Four

Four SERMONS ON Pſalm LXXXI. 11, 12.

The Firſt Sermon.

Pſal. LXXXI. 11, 12.

But my People would not hearken to my Voice, and Iſrael *would none of me, ſo I gave them up to their own Hearts luſts : and they walked in their own Counſels.*

THE *Jews* have a Tradition, that at ſtated times of the year God doth lament and complaine over their ruined Temple at *Jeruſalem*; that *Temple* that was once the Seat of his Glory, and the Place of his

special Residence for so long a time. Their own Value, and affection for it, made them fondly imagine, that God himself could not behold its Ashes and Dissolution without Resentment: Not considering that the Wickedness of the People called by his Name, and entrusted with the Priviledges of his House, had provoked his most righteous severity to lay it waste. This was a weak and groundless Fancy of the carnal *Jews*: We have other Measures whereby to Judge of the blessed God. We are fully assured that his Thoughts are not as ours in such matters; That it is a far sadder spectacle in his Eye, to behold the Hypocrisy and Carnality of those that worship in his *Temple*, than to see it laid in Ruines; a far more dismal sight, to behold the offers of his Grace refused, and slighted; to have the Invitations of the Gospel, and the glad Tidings of Peace rejected, by those who can be saved no other Way; and who must perish if they neglect this great Salvation: To see Multitudes of *such* continue under the Power of sin, willfully choosing the way of Destruction, and hardning their own Hearts against all the gracious

ous Methods of their Recovery; *This* in the Judgment of God, who Judgeth Righteous Judgment, is by far the more astonishing, and deplorable Object.

For we never read of God's complaining of any Thing so much as of this. And how often, and in what passionate Expressions doth he complain of the Obstinacy, Unteachableness, and Wilfulness of the *Jews*, his ancient People; *Oh that they were wise! O that they would consider! how long will you not be purged? when shall it once be? why will ye dye?* &c. And the Prophet *Isaiah* introduceth Christ, and his Apostles, complaining to the like Purpose, *Who hath believed our Report: and to whom is the Arm of the Lord revealed?* This was that which our compassionate Redeemer resented even unto *Tears*, concerning *Jerusalem* in the Dayes of his Flesh, when he beheld the City and wept over it, saying, *O that thou hadst known, even thou, in this thy day, the Things that belong to thy Peace*, &c. And in the verse following the Text, *O that my People had hearkened to my Voice, and walked in my Ways.* This is the Subject Matter of the complaint

Isa. 53. 1.

Luk. 19. 41.

of these Words, which is attended with a Threatning, of one of the heaviest Judgments that can be inflicted: *My People would not hearken to my Voice, and* Israel *would none of me: So I gave them up*, &c.

Here is, *First*, A most Reproaching Complaint. *Secondly*, A most Terrible Threatning. The Complaint is in the 11th verse, *My People would not hearken to my Voice*, &c.

The most significant Words are used to awaken Shame, and Indignation in the guilty Persons against themselves, for refusing to hearken to the Voice of God.

First, Their Fault is aggravated from their near Relation to God, *My People, Israel*, the beloved Nation, my peculiar People, favoured above the Rest of the World with many special advantages, *They* did not hearken to me.

Secondly, From their Wilfulness, *They would not hearken to me. They would none of me.* For though the first Expression in the *Hebrew*, be only thus, My People *did not* hearken to me, yet the latter Words, *They would none of me*, doth lay

lay the Blame upon their own Wilfulneſs, and does ſufficiently Juſtify our Tranſlation of it.

It is aggravated, *Thirdly*, From what their not hearkening to Gods Voice did imply, and carry in it, *That they would none of God; they refuſed to have* God for their God. They cared not for any Relation to him, or Acquaintance with him, or Inſtruction from him, or Happineſs by him; *They would none of me.*

Secondly, unto this Complaint in the 11*th verſe* is Subjoyned a *terrible Threatning*, *ver.* 12*th*, *So I gave them up to their Hearts Luſts, to walk in their own Councels.* In the *Hebrew* both Expreſſions are in the *Future*, that for their former Provocations God would do ſo, and the *latter* is the Conſequence of the *former.* The walking in their own Councels, is the Fruit of their being given up to their own Hearts Luſts.

There are two Things may be collected as the Sum of both Verſes, to be diſcourſed of from them.

Firſt, That it is Matter of Juſt Complaint and Reproach, when a People,

or Person, will not hearken to the Voice of God.

Secondly, That for such wilful Persons to be given up to their own Hearts Lusts, so as to be left of God, to walk in their own Councels, is one of the most fearful Judgments that can be threatned, or inflicted in this World.

Something I would speak to the *former* though in order to the latter, which is principally designed. And what Subject more seasonable, or more likely to be useful, unto those who have the Voice of God repeated to them Week after Week, with such Frequency, and Variety, as you have it in this City.

First, *That it is Matter of Just Complaint, and Reproach, for any People, or Person not to hearken to the Voice of* God. And here it will be proper to shew, 1. What it is, not to hearken to the Voice of God. 2. How this appears to be such Just Matter of Complaint from God, and Reproach unto us, who are guilty of it.

First, What it is not to hearken to the Voice of God. By the Voice of God here,

here, we are to Understand, that of his Word; as is manifest from *Jer.* 7. 23, 28. *Verses. This thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my Voice, and I will be your God. But they hearkned not, nor inclined their Ear, but walked in the Councels and Imaginations of their own evil Hearts; therefore shalt thou say unto them this is a Nation that Obeyeth not the Voice of the Lord their God.* His instructing and informing Voice, is here meant, That which discovers the Nature of God, and our Duty, the wretched state of our Case by the first Apostacy, and the Method of our Recovery to the Image and Life of God, and Communion with him. It is also his commanding Voice, unto the Authority whereof, we all owe utmost Obedience and subjection. It is that Voice of God which warns us of our Danger; invites us to Terms of Peace and Reconciliation; directs us what we ought to do, that we may be saved, &c. And have we not all the Obligation in the World, to hearken to this Voice? carefully to attend to it? to consider its Authority? to make a Judgment about its Necessity, and Importance, about the Reasonableness and

advantages of our Obedience? &c.

Now there be many that *Openly*, and *Expreſly* refuſe to hearken to this Voice. But the Number is greater of ſuch, who do it *Vertually*, and in *Effect*: either by their groundleſs Cavils and Objections againſt the Word of God; or by their frivolous Excuſes, and fooliſh Delays of complying with it; or by Obeying the contrary Dictates of the Fleſh and the World, and hearkening to the Voice of *Satan*; by all which they manifeſt their Unwillingneſs to hearken to the Voice of God.

But, *Secondly*, How does this appear to be ſuch a Matter of Juſt *Complaint* and *Reproach*? To this Purpoſe we may conſider, 1. *Whoſe Voice it is* you refuſe to hearken to: *Heb.* 1. 2. the Voice of God *by his Son*, Whom he hath appointed Heir of all Things, and by whom he made the World, the Brightneſs of his Fathers Glory, *Heb.* 2. 2. the Expreſs Image of his Perſon. If Diſobedience to the Word ſpoken by Angels, received a Juſt Recompence of Reward, *How ſhall we eſcape, if we neglect, and ſlight, and*

and will not hearken to that Word of Salvation which began to be ſpoken by our Lord himſelf. See therefore (ſayes the Apoſtle) that you refuſe not him that ſpeaketh; for if they Eſcaped not who refuſed him that ſpake on Earth, Much more ſhall not we Eſcape if we turn away from him that ſpeaketh from Heaven. Heb. 12. 25. ver. I might amplify this by Conſidering the Authority, the Veracity, the Wiſdom, the Kindneſs and Condeſcention, of him that ſpeaketh; and to whom we are called, and Obliged to hearken.

I might aggravate it, by Conſidering how all our Senſes, and our Reaſon, our Power of Hearing, and Underſtanding are all from *Him*: And how often he hath heard *our Voice* when we have cryed to him in our Diſtreſs. And how ready he is to hear us in every time of need, when none elſe can help or ſave us: And how ſeverely he can puniſh our Refuſal: For in his hand is our Life and Breath, and all our Ways. It is he who hath Power to ſave or to Deſtroy, and ſhall we refuſe to hearken to *his Voice*? Yea further, he deſignes our Good, and intends our Happineſs, by what he ſpeaks. He can have

have no Accession to his own by our Felicity, but might glorify himself in our Ruine, if we decline the Invitations of his Mercy, and refuse to hearken to his Voice.

Secondly, Consider, not only who it is that speaks, but *what kind of Voice it is*. How gentle, how obliging, how benificent, and condescending. He doth not now speak to us with Majestick Terrour, in Thunder and Lightning, with such an amazing Voice as upon Mount *Sinai*, to the People of the *Jews*: When he made *the Mountaine shake, and the People Tremble, and even Moses himself exceedingly to do so.* But imploys Messengers like our selves, to speak in his Name. He considers our weakness, and the Necessity of our Case, and promises to accompany the ordinary Preaching of the Gospel, with the Power of his Spirit. That the great and necessary truths published, explained, and pressed, by a serious Ministry, shall be the Power of God unto Salvation. He requires those that are intrusted with this work, to instruct, to exhort, to warn and re-

Heb. 12. 26.

reprove, to beseech and intreat you in the Name of Christ, with Earnestness and Importunity, that you would not receive the Grace of God in vain; that you would be reconciled to God, praying you in Christ's stead that you would be so, least the Things that concern your Peace should be for Ever hid from your Eyes.

Thirdly, Consider, *Who They are, that are said to refuse to hearken to the Voice of God. My People Israel.* My First born, more nearly related to me, more peculiarly favoured and priviledged by me, than the rest of the World. We Christians succeed in their Priviledges, not only as Domestick Servants, but as *Children*, visibly related to God, as our Father, by the Covenant of Baptism. And shall not Children receive the Instruction of a Parent? a stubborn Son that refused to hearken to the Voice of his natural Parent, was under the Law, to be *stoned to Death*: and all the Men in the City, were to have a Hand in bringing such a Monster to that deserved Punishment. *Deut.* 21. 18.

Fourthly, That the Complaint and Reproach is Just, will appear by considering

ſidering, *what is Connected with* it, in the Words that immediately follow, *Iſrael would none of me*, that is, if they will not hearken to my Voice; they declare *they will have none of me*. God offers himſelf to enter into a Covenant, and *to be your God*; only obey my Voice and I will be ſo. But they inquire not after him. There is none that ſaith, *where is God my Maker?* They will none of me, *i. e.* they will not have me to be their Lord and Ruler, they will not have me to be their Portion and Chief Good. It is plain they will not, becauſe they refuſe my Teachings, and Guidance; they will not hearken to my Voice.

Now this being duely attended to, will ſufficiently Juſtify the Divine Severity, v. 12. towards ſuch who will not hearken to the Voice of God. For thereby they do in Effect bid him *depart* from them, they tell him, *we deſire not the Knowledge of thy Ways*. And if hereafter he ſhould bid them *depart* from him *into Everlaſting Fire*, with the Workers of Iniquity, the Sentence would not be more *dreadful* than *Righteous*. If he ſay, Depart from me, you un-

unthankful despisers of my Grace; I would have instructed, and sanctifyed, and saved you, *but you would not*; I called, but you refused, and turned the deaf Ear; I exhorted, and beseeched, and intreated you to have Pity on your selves in Time, but you would not hearken to my Voice. I faithfully warned you of your danger, but you made light of it. I offered to be *your God*, and to make you happy and blessed for Ever, if you would but *accept* my offer; but *you would none of me.* Therefore if he should speak to them hereafter in his Wrath, and vex them in his sore Displeasure: if he *then* be Deaf to their Crys, who *now* refuse to hearken to his Voice, their Sentence will be Just.

And no less would it be if God should inflict the heavy Doom mentioned in this Text: which is the Beginning of Hell, where it continues without Remedy, and timely Relief is not admitted. Such as will not hearken to the Voice of God; the Language of whose Heart is thereby manifest, that they will none of him, Such as these, God may Justly *give up to their own Hearts Lusts; and leave them to walk in their*

their own destructive Councels. And this brings me to consider *the Second Proposition.*

That for wilful Sinners to be given up to their own Hearts Lusts, and to be left of God to walk in their own Councels, is one of the most tremendous Judgments that can be threatned, or inflicted in this World.

First, What is it for God to give up any to their own Hearts Lusts.

Secondly, What is his usual Method of inflicting such a Judgment.

Thirdly, Wherein does the Terrour and Dread of such a Judgment appear? or what Considerations will manifest this to be such a dismal Judgment? What I shall speak under these *Three Heads* will make way for the practical Application.

I must grant that there is an unsearchable Depth in the divine Judgments; especially in his Methods of Severity towards the Souls of Men: And therefore when we have gone as far as Scripture and Experience will direct and lead us, we must yet cry out, *O the bottomless Depths of the Divine Coun-*

Councels: how unsearchable are his Judgments, and his ways past finding out? However, we must hold to this, that *all his Works are perfect*: and that *he is a God of Truth, and without Iniquity; his Ways are Judgment, and Just and Right is he.* And it is remarkable that this is spoken after a terrible Expression a little before concerning the *Jews*, that after having seen the Signs and Wonders and Miracles that God wrought among them, *yet hath he not given you a Heart to perceive, and Eyes to see, and Ears to hear, unto this Day.*

Rom. 11. 33: Deut. 32. 4. Deut. 29. 3, 4.

But whatever Obscurity there may be in the Manner, yet such a Thing as Gods leaving Men to themselves must be acknowledged; yea, his pouring out a spirit of slumber and deep sleep upon Men, closing their Eyes in righteous Judgment, after they have wilfully shut them.

Isa. 10. 29. Mar. 4. 12.

Never was any People so punished in this Manner, as the Nation of the *Jews*. After having long resisted the Spirit, neither Word, nor Rod could awaken them, but the Things of their Peace,

Peace, were hid from their Eyes. But we must not conceive of this, as an Act merely of *Will and Pleasure* in God; without Respect to their former sin. But consider it *as an act of Righteous Judgment, upon great Provocation.* This Doom never goes before the Fault; when they will not be purged, they are left to be filthy still. After long striving and Resistance God lets 'em Alone. We must view it as something *Judicial* toward those who had highly deserved it, by former Refusals of his Grace, and disobeying his Voice: And therefore when God is said in the 4th of *Exodus* to harden *Pharaoh*, let us consider who he was, and what he had done: Was he not guilty of the most prophane contempt of God, *Who is the Lord, that I should obey his Voice? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go, Exod.* 5. 2. And was he not guilty of the most barbarous Injustice, and Cruelty against the People of God? Had he not for many years oppress't, and inslaved them? were not He and his Subjects resolved to destroy those whom God resolved to preserve? &c. He is *three times* said to have hardned his own heart.

Exod.

Exod. 8. 15, 32. And *chap.* 9. 34. Tho he had ſufficient means of Conviction, by *Aarons* Rod ſwallowing up thoſe of the *Magicians*, 7 *Exod.* 12. And by the *Magicians* being non-pluſt in their Art, concerning the Judgment of Lice, *Exod.* 8. 18. And they themſelves were ſmitten with Boils, *Chap* 9. 11, 12. And now and then *Pharoah* had ſome Relentings, *chap* 9. 27, 10 *chap.* 16. 17.

So the *Jews* in our Saviour's Time, concerning whom the like Expreſſions are uſed, *John* 12. 40. They were ſuch as hated the Light, as would not accept of *Chriſt*, or his Forerunner the *Baptiſt*, but ſaid of both, that they were poſſeſſed of a Devil. In this Caſe we may uſe the Apoſtles Expreſſion, *Is God unrighteous, who taketh Vengeance? God forbid.* Here indeed is very diſmal Severity, but there is no ſhadow of unrighteouſneſs. *Rom.* 3. 5.

This being premiſed, we may conſider, *Firſt*, What theſe Luſts of Mens Hearts are? *Secondly*, What it is to be given up *Judicially* to them.

The Luſts of our Hearts unto which ſome are given up by God, may Comprehend the falſe Imaginations, and undue Conceptions of Things that are

framed in the Soul, concerning God, and our selves, Sin and Duty, Happiness and Misery, &c. And our Irregular Desires, and Inclinations; with all the wicked Projects, and Contrivances of the Soul, concerning the gratifying and fulfilling the Lusts of the Flesh, the Lusts of the Eyes, and the Pride of Life.

Now for God to give up any Men to these Lusts, so as not to hinder them from walking in their own Councels, is not to be supposed as if he gave his *approving Consent*, that they should obey these Lusts: Not that he gave them leave to sin, or approved what they did, in serving divers Lusts, but that which is chiefly comprehended in it is,

First, That such Persons are cast out of Gods special Protection and Care, and so are exposed to wander and go astray: *To walk as a Lamb in a large Place*, and so are more easily assaulted, and Overcome by the Devil, who seeketh whom he may destroy. *Hos.* 4. 16.

Secondly, That they are left of God under the Dominion, and Power, and Tyranny of their own Lusts; *He that is*

is filthy let him be filthy still. Rom. 22.
11. *He that heareth let him hear*; *and he*
that forbeareth let him forbear, for
they are a Rebellious House. So *Ezek.*
that the Restraints and Checks 3. 27.
that they were formerly under,
by the Motions of his Spirit; or by
External Providence, should no
longer hinder them in the Pro- *Mar.*
secution of their Lusts. *They* 4. 11.
shall not be smitten any more, nor *Job.*
their way hedged up with 12.
Thorns. The Spirit of God 34.
shall not strive with them any *Eze.*
more; at least not to such a 24, 13.
Degree as formerly. 16, 4.
Nay further, we read of Mens *Hos.* 4.
being given up, after sins a- 14.
gainst Light, unto a * *Reprobate*
unteachable Mind, to vile affecti- * *Rom.*
ons, to unnatural Lusts. Yea, de- 1. 28,
livered up to * *strong Delusions* 29,
of Satan, that they may believe 30,
Lyes, that they may be damn- 31.
ned. But remember this is an
Act of *Justice* and *Righteousness* *2 *Thes.*
in God; for the Persons thus 2. 11.
given up are describ'd to be
such *as would not receive the Truth in*
the Love of it.

That there is such a Judgment as

this, besides the Expres Testimonies of Scripture, is manifest by *sad Experience*. For what tolerable account can be otherwise given of the Generality of professing Christians, with whom the sence of Duty, the Honour of Christ, the Interest of his Kingdom, have so little Influence, to a conscientious governing their Hearts and Lives? Yea how else is it? That notwithstanding Mercies and Judgments, notwithstanding providential warnings and gracious Calls, notwithstanding many Convictions and Resolutions, and good Beginnings, notwithstanding many severe Rebukes for past Backslidings, and some Experience how evil and bitter a Thing it is, and hath been, to forsake God? that yet in Despite of God, and Conscience, and all these Obstacles in their way, many have forsaken the Way of Righteousness, and wallowed againe in the Pollutions of the World, after they had escaped it. And whatever Hazard they run by it, whatever Difficulties they meet in their way, whatever Methods have been used to recover and save them, yet on they will go: and from a seeming Zeal for God

God and Godlineſs, and conſtant dayly Exerciſe of the principal Duties of Religion in their Families, and Cloſets, they come at laſt to live without any of theſe; in the total Neglect of ſuch Duties, and in allowed Practiſes of Drunkeneſs, Uncleaneſs, and Unrighteouſneſs, with the Contempt of the Means of their Converſion, and a ſecret Enmity againſt the true Intereſt of Chriſt in the World, and againſt the ſerious Profeſſion and Power of Godlineſs.

My Friends, The Caſe of ſuch Apoſtates, and the more common Degeneracy of many Others, after good and hopeful Beginnings, who have ſinned themſelves into a quiet peaceful Conſcience, or rather into ſtupidity and Hardneſs of Heart, notwithſtanding the Dayly Commiſſion of great Abominations; the deplorable Caſe, I ſay, of ſuch Perſons, and the Frequency of ſuch Caſes, makes it manifeſt that there is ſuch a Thing as mens being left of God, and given up to their own Hearts Luſts.

But remember, I call it a *deplorable Caſe*, not an *irrecoverable* one. For I do not think, as to all ſuch Perſons, that

their Day of Grace is past; that the Things of their Peace are so hid from their Eyes, that it is impossible for them to be renewed to Repentance. There are Degrees of Gods forsaking Men; there is a *total* and there is a *partial Obduracy* and Hardness of Heart. But I shall speak more of this afterwards.

We should *Secondly*, Consider by *what Method* God does for the most part proceed, to inflict and Execute such a Judgment as this. But

Thirdly, For the present let us briefly consider the *Severity* and *Terrour* of this Judgment. According to the Degrees of this Punishment inflicted on any, so is the Wretchedness of their Case in Proportion to be estimated. For a Man to be totally left to the Hardness and Obduracy of his own Heart, there is no Judgment in this World so severe: and therefore sayes * Dr. *Owen, it is never Executed, but towards those that are habitually and obstinately wicked, and do out of choice harden themselves in their sins.*

You may Consider the Dread and Horrour of such a Judgment by read-

* *Owens Dominion of Sin, Page* 73.

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ing *Prov.* 1. 23. *Heb.* 10. 26, &c. Very much may be gathered from *Luke* 19. 41, 42. Where we have a most significant Representation of such a dismal Case, in our Lords affectionate Bewailing of the Misery of *Jerusalem*, as forsaken and left of God. *He beheld the City*, and mingled his Lamentations over it with his *Tears*. Saying, *O! Jerusalem, Jerusalem, if thou hadst known, even thou, at least, in this thy Day, the Things which belong unto thy Peace! but now they are hid from thine Eyes.* He knew how deplorable the Condition of such Persons must needs be, and what was due to so great a Calamity, or he would not have lamented it with Tears. He knew the aggravation of their Guilt, and the Severity of the Divine Justice, and the Value of Immortal Souls, and the Depth of Misery, into which such guilty sinners are sinking; he perfectly knew these Things, or he would not have bestowed Tears upon this Occasion.

And which yet is most * Dreadful to

* *See Mr.* How's *Redeemers Tears. Pag.* 149.

conſider, when Perſons are become incurably Obſtinate, and Impenitent unto Perdition, the Redeemers Tears may Expreſs his Compaſſion, but will not abate their Miſery, or aſſwage their Torment. They that have rejected and diſpiſed his Mercy, and trampled upon his Blood, ſhall yet have his Tears of Compaſſion. The former would have ſaved them, but the latter only bewails their Folly, and their Miſery, what they have loſt becauſe they would not be ſaved. They neglected God's ſeaſon and he departed, *Hoſea* 5. 6. *They ſhall go with their flocks, and with their herds to ſeek the Lord; But they ſhall not find him; He hath withdrawn himſelf from them.* So *John* 8. 21. *Then ſaid Jeſus again unto them, I go my way, and ye ſhall ſeek me, and ſhall dy in your ſins: Whither I go, ye cannot come.*

It is impoſſible for me to deſcribe the Horrour of their Caſe, with whom Matters are come to this Iſſue: That God reſolves *to let them alone*, to give them up into the Hands of their own Counſels, to leave them to their own Hearts Luſts, to the Dominion and Tyranny of their vile Affections and

and Inclinations, *that they shall be holden in the Cords of their own Iniquity, and without further Instruction, or Restraint, in the midst of their Folly, be left of God to go astray.* Prov. 5.22, 23. When because they would not be purged, they shall not be purged, till the Divine Fury be made to rest upon them. God will *let them Alone*, and say, if they will go on to treasure up Wrath against a Day of Wrath, *e'ne let them do it*; If they will harden their Hearts, if they will dye, if they are so intent upon their own Ruin, as that they refuse my counsel, and slight my Reproofs, and resist my Spirit, and hate to be Reform'd; let them take their Course, let them walk in the Ways of their own Heart, and in the Sight of their Eyes, let them prosecute their own foolish Choice; I will do nothing to hinder it: My Gospel shall not instruct and heal them; My Spirit shall not to any good purpose longer strive with them; that which is the Savour of Life, and the Power of God unto salvation unto Others, shall have a deadly Savour unto them.

No

No words can expreſs *the Horrour of* ſuch a Caſe. And ſuch a Caſe is *poſſible*, but we have no certaine Rule given us whereby to determine our Judgment concerning any particular Perſon, ſo as to enable us to ſay poſitively, *This is the ſad condition of ſuch a Man, or ſuch a Woman*: But becauſe many fear it is their own Caſe, and the Perſon, who by a Letter deſired me to preach on this Subject, is afraid leſt Things may already be come to this Iſſue, I will not now cloſe without ſome *Application*.

And Paſſing over ſeveral Uſes that may be made of this, I ſhall hence take Occaſion to Exhort to three Things.

Firſt, To take heed not to paſs a definitive Sentence againſt your ſelves, concerning the ſtate of your own Souls, as to this Judgment. *Secondly*, However to apprehend the Danger of approaching to it, if you are under any ill Symptoms of that kind, and beware of thoſe Things that have a Tendency to ſo ſad a Doom. *Thirdly*, Diligently to improve the Means you are yet under, by the Warnings of the Word, convicti-

convictions of Conscience, and the Motions of the Divine Spirit, that you may Effectually prevent it. That as it is not your Case for the present, it never may be so.

First, Take heed of passing a definitive Sentence against your selves in this matter. There is a Time even with the Impenitent and Unconverted, when God may move their Hearts more strongly unto Conversion, than afterwards: And when such a Time is over with thee, thou mayest be apt to think that God hath utterly Abandon'd, and Forsaken thee; and be ready to conclude *Thy Day of Grace is past.* In this Sense it may be past with many long before their Death, and yet their state not be irrecoverable. This is like enough to be the Case of many of you present; but you need not thereupon question but you shall be accepted of God, if you are *now* willing to return to him. You have no ground to question whether Christ will receive you, if you are willing to come to him; or whether pardoning Mercy may be had if you penitently forsake your wicked ways, and turn to the Lord with all your heart.

Men

Men that formerly had some Motions and Helps to Repentance, which they neglected and misimproved, and obstinately resisted, may be so given up to their Obstinacy, as never to have such Motions more; and so on that Account *the Day of Grace* may be past with divers. But such Persons are hardened in Sin, and hate an Holy Life, oppose serious Godliness, and the Means of their Recovery, *&c.* But *the Day of Grace* is never so past in this Life with any Man, as that he shall not be accepted and pardoned, if he do truly repent. Therefore for a penitent returning Sinner to fear his Day of Grace is utterly past, or that his Repentance, if it be true, does now come too late; This is to contradict the whole Tenour and Scope of the Gospel. Your Case may be more dangerous than that of most others, and yet not *Irrecoverable*. Be sure it is not, if you have not sinn'd that Sin which can't be pardon'd; which in the general, I firmly believe no man is guilty of, who is afraid lest he hath been, or is so guilty.

Our Obstinate continued forsaking of God, is the great sign of our being forsaken

forſaken of him: And where that is not the Caſe, you ſhould not Judg ſo concerning your ſelves, or others. And even where it is ſo, for the preſent, the Grace of God may be rejected for many years; and yet we may hope that ſome Perſons may afterwards be converted by that Grace, which before they rejected. So that we cannot tell what God will do as to particular Perſons. Neither would it be any advantage for us to know if ſuch and ſuch, be ſo far forſaken of God, as that they ſhall never be recovered, but continue in their Obſtinacy and Impenitency to the End of their Days. God hath * not made it any Man's Duty to believe this concerning himſelf, nor to beleive it concerning any other particular Perſon.

Some of thoſe whoſe Hearts were once as hard as yours, who ſlighted Chriſt as much, and as long, as you have done, who diſpiſed many awakening Warnings, who refuſed and turn'd their Backs upon many Invitations and Calls of the Goſpel, and reſiſted the Spirit of Grace for a long

* *Mr.* How's *Redeemers Tears*, *pag.* 82.

Time,

Time, have afterwards been made the Triumph of the Power, Love and Grace of God. Therefore don't pass a definitive Sentence against your selves.

To pass a Judgment upon our State, and to believe it concerning our selves, is to nullify the Gospel, and to make it impossible for us to Repent and Believe, which God hath made to be our Duty. It is a sinful prescribing limits to the Grace of God, to say, *It hath waited on me so long, it will, it can wait no longer.*

Secondly, However Apprehend the Danger of the present Case, if you are under any such Symptoms as have a Tendency to so severe a Judgment as this is. It may be you have sinned your selves into hardness of Heart, that you are not affected with the Word Preached as formerly; that you do not find such Impressions by it; that the Operations of the Spirit, with the Word, that were formerly strong, do now seem to cease. You are not so affected with the Evil of Sin, with such hearty Sorrow, and bitter Repentance as formerly, tho thy sins be most highly aggravated; And are little affected with the sins of others; you are more

sence-

senceless, stupid, and secure under the Guilt of great Provocations, than formerly: And this, notwithstanding some Tokens of God's Displeasure by afflictive Rebukes of Providence. It may be you have taken up with a fruitless, barren, empty Profession of Religion, for a long Time; joyn'd with the Neglect of the inward Spiritual Part of Godliness, Mortification of Sin, Watchfulness over your Hearts, Government of your Thoughts, Passions, and Sences, &c. And have gone on in a formal Course and Round, of some external Duties; without Heart, or Life, or Quickning; and this contrary to your Convictions, Resolutions, and repeated Promises, &c. This case is exceeding sad, and sinful, and *God* only knows where it will Issue, if deep and timely Repentance do not awaken you. You ought to apprehend it to be indeed a very *provoking*, and *dangerous Case*, but not quite *desperate*.

Nay, let me go further, *Secret Prayer*, it may be, hath been neglected for a Time, or performed with so much coldness, that *you now Tremble* to think how low you are sunk: Or which is much worse, it may be you do *not* Tremble.

Tremble. The Power of Conſcience is in a great meaſure loſt, both in reſtraining from Sin, and in checking for it. You can now more eaſily ſtifle Convictions, rebel againſt Light, and venture upon a known ſin, indulge a ſecret Luſt, and allow your ſelves thoſe Things from day to day, which formerly you could not without ſharp Rebukes of Conſcience: And ſuch Preaching, and ſuch Helps as did once ſtartle, awaken, and quicken you, have now little or no ſuch Effect; This is indeed unſpeakably diſmal. O! how low are ſuch fallen? how difficult, how ſorrowful muſt be the awakening and Recovery of ſuch Backſliders? What can be ſaid to ſuch Perſons? and why ſhould they not fear the Judgment of this Text? leſt *God give them up to their own Hearts Luſts.* I am ſo far from diſcouraging *ſuch a Fear*, that I would by all Means awaken it. Therefore I ſay it would be *Juſt* with God, to caſt thee off, and God would be Righteous, if he reject thee utterly, if he forſake thee for Ever, if he never ſtrive with thy Heart more, if Never Providence or Sermon do thee good more. This would be *Juſt*.

But

But at the ſame Time let *Hope* be intermingled with *Fear*; there is much Cauſe to *Fear*, but there is none to *Deſpair*, the one is a *Duty*, and the other a *Sin*: And if the Conſideration of your ſin and Danger, begin to melt and mollify your Heart, then know that Chriſt came not to call the Righteous, but *Sinners*, to Repentance; and mercy may yet be had; *he takes pleaſure in them that hope in his Mercy; it is by hope we are ſaved.* Therefore aggravate your ſins, and the grounds of your Fear, and the Danger of your periſhing to Eternity: But don't ſit down in Deſpondency; don't yeild your ſelves to periſh, without ſtriving to prevent it. Fall down before his Mercy-Seat, ſtudy the Nature, and Promiſes of the Covenant of Grace, and fly to Chriſt, according to the general Invitation, and Call of the Goſpel to that End.

Thirdly, If your Hearts begin to melt, and move within you, who have apprehended your ſelves in Danger of this Judgment, if you are yet under the ſtrivings of the Spirit, (as your very ſollicitude and Fear about it, and Deſire of Aſſiſtance, doth Imply,) then I would beſeech you to ſet pre-

ſently to work out your Salvation with all Diligence. Let not the Dictates of an awakened Conſcience be hush'd, and ſilenc'd: Cheriſh and obey the holy Motions of the Spirit: Let not your preſent Convictions and Reſolutions become abortive, for want of Meditation, and Prayer, and adviſing with your Miniſters, and Judicious, Faithful Friends. Eſpecially take heed of extinguiſhing the Sentiments of an awakened Conſcience by new Guilt, and freſh Tranſgreſſions. While Conſcience is thus at Work, your Converſion is more probable, and hopeful now than formerly: If you quench not the Motions of the Spirit, and provoke him to leave you. If you will but hearken to his Voice, and follow his Counſel, and not again harden your Hearts: If you would *now* earneſtly implore, and thankfully entertaine, and carefully improve his holy Influences.

Is it not of higheſt Importance, that you do ſo without Delay? When your Breath is in your Noſtrils, *and the Day of your Life, and your Day of Grace, may both be ended before to morrow Morning.* Should not the Kindneſs of God overcome

overcome you? That Mercy is offered to such returning Backsliders? should it not be a melting, transporting Thought, for such *as you* to consider, that Christ invites you to come to him, if you are weary and heavy laden, and promises Rest. Read *Judges*, 10*th* the latter End, for your Encouragment, where God having delivered his People, and they yet forsook him, it is said, that *he would deliver them no more*, but bid them go to the Gods they had chosen: But they cryed to him, and turned from their evil Ways, and his Soul was greived for them, and *he did deliver them.* They cryed heartily, *Lord, do unto us what seemeth thee good, only deliver us*, so do you in like Manner, and *there is yet Hope*; Go in secret, and tell him, that it is the Desire of your Souls, now to return to him, beg his sanctifying Spirit with utmost Importunity, plead the Vertue of the Blood of Christ, say unto him, *Lord do with me what thou wilt*; afflict me how thou pleasest, strip me of all my pleasant Things, if that may serve the Ends of *thy Glory*; only let not thy holy Spirit forsake me; only deliver me out of the hands of my Lusts; break these my

Chains, knock off these Fetters; save me from my sins, and from thy Wrath; accept me for thy Covenant servant, write thy Law upon my Heart, that I may walk in thy Ways: And whatever thou give me, or whatever thou deny me, *Lord, for Jesus Christ's sake, never give me up to my own Hearts Lusts, that I should be left to walk in my own Counsels.* Amen.

The

The Second Sermon.

Psalm LXXXI. 12.

So I gave them up to their own Hearts lusts: and they walked in their own Counsels.

WE can never look back to our primitive state, considering how richly and plentifully the Bounty of our Maker had provided for us, without admiring Thoughts of his Beneficence and Kindness: And yet, if we view the Divine Compassion unto guilty and rebellious Man since the Fall, and how many obstacles his Grace overcame; This latter will be Judged to surpass his former Bounty to Innocent

Man. For before the Entrance of ſin, the Current of Divine Love met with nothing to obſtruct its paſſage, there was nothing to diſcourage its Exerciſe towards an Innocent and Obedient Creature: But now ſin hath made a great gulf betwixt God and us; We are in a ſtate of Enmity, and Hoſtility againſt Him; which ſets a value upon the Power, and Freeneſs of the Grace imployed to Recover and ſave us.

And yet, after all this diſplay of the unſearchable Riches of Grace, and Love in the Work of our Redemption, it is a queſtion whether our willful, provoking Obſtinacy againſt God, be not more aſtoniſhing, than his undeſerved Compaſſion and Love to us; that in contradiction to all the Principles of Reaſon, and Intereſt, we ſhould ſlight his Kindneſs, and deſpiſe his glorious Love, and refuſe his Grace, the only Remedy that can ſave us: That when he offers to be Reconciled to us, and intreats us to be Reconciled to him, we will not hearken to his Voice: That we ſhould perſiſt in our choſen Diſtance, and Eſtrangment, and ſay, *We will have none of him*; Let him

him depart from us, we desire not the Knowledge of his ways; We care for no Reconciliation to him, or Communion with him, or any share in the Happiness he offers to confer upon us. Were not this very highly provoking, the Blessed God would not *Complain* of it, as he doth; and *Reproach* us with it, as he also doth, in many places, and particularly in this, *My People would not hearken to my Voice, and* Israel *would none of me; so I gave them up, &c.* Both Expressions are in the *future*, though we translate them as already inflicted: The Original signifies that God *would* deal so severely with them. The Aggravations of this Complaint of God concerning *Israel* have been already mentioned. What I propose now to discourse of is this.

First, That it is matter of most Just Complaint, and most heavy Reproach, when any People or Person will not hearken to the Voice of God.

Secondly, That for any wilful sinners to be given up by God to their own Hearts Lusts, and left to walk in their own Counsels, is one of the most fear-

ful Judgments that can be threatned, or inflicted.

In speaking to the *Second* General, I proposed to shew, *First*, What it is for God to give Men up to their own Hearts Lusts. And that such a thing there *may be*, and *is*, as Gods giving men over to their false Imaginations, and Conceptions of things; their inordinate Desires and irregular Passions; their wicked Projects and Contrivances for the fulfilling of their various Lusts, &c. When he gives them up to these Lusts, he casts them out of his special Care and Protection, so as they become an easy prey to the Devil. And the Hebrew word which we translate *give up*, is often used for *the casting out* a People out of their Country, as in 44. *Psal.* 2. Such Persons are also left of God under the Tyranny and Dominion of their Lusts, without those Restraints of Providence and Grace which before they had. What more may be intended in such an Expression, will appear in speaking to *the Second Head*, viz.

To shew *by what steps and Degrees, God doth execute, and inflict such a Judgment upon them.* And then, *Thirdly*, I shall

shall speak something further of the *Dreadfulness* of this Judgment, and so *Apply* the whole.

II. By What steps or Degrees the Blessed God doth usually proceed in inflicting such a Judgment as this. For the better understanding of this, I must premise by way of Caution.

1. That Whatever Method is taken in the Execution of so severe a Doom, we must remember there is a great depth of *Obscurity* in these Judgments of God; There is so in all his works of Judgment, but especially in such as do more immediately relate to the Souls of Men. We know very little of the manner of Gods Influence upon mens Spirits, and therefore should be very humble and wary, modest and cautious in our Expressions about it. And yet from what we observe of such spiritual Judgments, we may cry out with the Apostle, *Rom.* 11. 33. *O the depth of the Riches both of the Wisdom and Knowledg of God! How unsearchable are his Judgments, and his Ways past finding out!* We know very little of the manner of the Holy Spirit's Influence, in forming the Image of God upon the Soul; and much less concerning

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the manner of this Punishment in the Text; whereby men are hardened in sin through the righteous Judgment of God, to their Eternal Ruine. However,

2. Remember, This is *a Judicial Act* in God, not an arbitrary thing, that depends upon meer Will and Pleasure, without any respect to the Aggravations of Mens wilful Rebellion and sinning against Light. It is such a Judgment as supposes very hainous Provocations to precede it. The Instance of the *Jews* doth abundantly prove this; with whom the Patience of God did long bear, and his Spirit strive; But *they always resisted the Holy Ghost*, *Acts* 7. 51. From generation to generation, maintaining the war against the Divine Spirit, *till he turned to be their Enemy, and fought against them. Isa.* 63. 9, 10. And then their Doom is pronounc'd in a most solemn manner, with terrible and astonishing Preparations for it, *Isa.* 6. By a glorious Apparition of the great God in the Temple, which made the Prophet cry out, *I am undone*, &c. The fearful message he was to deliver, to that People, was that 9, 10. *v. Hear ye indeed, but understand*

Stand not; see ye indeed, but perceive not; make the Heart of this people fat, and their ears heavy, and shut their Eyes, lest they see with their Eyes, and hear with their Ears, and understand with their Heart, and convert, and be healed. This Doom we find with great Awfulness repeated in the new Testament by our Saviour, *Mat.* 13. 14. *Luk.* 8. 10. 12. *John* 12. And afterward by the Apostle *Paul* when he was testifying against the obstinate Infidelity of the *Jews* at *Rome*, *Rom.* 11. 8. We may therefore clear *the Righteousness* of God in this matter, by considering the true Account and *Character* of Those, whom we find in Scripture, or believe by Experience, to have been given up to their own Hearts Lusts. The Wickedness of *Pharoah* was risen to a very provoking height, before God is said to harden him, which was not till after the *sixth* Plague. The impenitent *Cananites* had 430 Years, before God gave them over, and their measure was full, *Josh.* 11. 19. *This* therefore, as it is one of *the severest Judgments*, so it is one of *the last*.

This also may admit of *Degrees* with reference to several Persons. For there

there is a *partial*, as well as a *total* forſaking of God, and being forſaken of him. There are ſome who ſin againſt their Light, and refuſe the Grace of the Goſpel, and may *for a time* be forſaken and left of God, and yet his Spirit *afterwards* ſtrive again; Whereas with others he may *never* ſtrive more. However in all theſe Caſes there is great Provocation that does precede, ſo that we may ſay with the Apoſtle, *Is God unrighteous, that he taketh Vengeance?* Rom. 3. 5.

3. I would alſo premiſe, That *the Holineſs* of God muſt be cleared, as well as his *Juſtice*. Though he give them up to their own Hearts Luſts, it is not by a conſenting, approving Act, with reference to the ſins they afterwards commit; much leſs that God inclines their Hearts to ſin, or infuſes, or ſuggeſts evil to them. It is not that He gives them Indulgence and Leave, with his Conſent and Approbation, to ſerve and fulfil any of thoſe Luſts. The ſpotleſs unchangable Purity of the Divine Nature, which hates every ſin, cannot conſiſt with this. *He cannot be tempted with Evil, neither tempteth any man to evil.*

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Therefore such Expressions as *Ezek.* 20. 39. *As for you, O House of* Israel, *thus saith the Lord, go you now every one and serve his Idols.* Such Expressions must be taken in an *Ironical* sense. That is, 'Go see whether the Objects of 'your Trust, and Confidence can 'save you in a time of Calamity: Go 'to the Gods that you have served, 'and see whether they will help you, 'for I will not. It is like the Expression, *Matth.* 26. 46. *Sleep on now, and take your Rest, for behold he cometh, by whom the Son of man is to be betrayed.* I desired you to watch with me, but you would not; and that season is now past, Sleep on now, if you can. When *Satan* blinds the Minds of men, he doth it by strengthening of their sin, he doth it by sinful suggestions, and the like: But the Blessed God doth not *thus* give men up to sin: No such Darkness can come from the Fountain of Light.

These things being *premised*, let us Consider some of those steps, by which God proceeds in this matter, as Scripture, Reason, and Experience may direct us; Though after all, there is a *Depth* in these Judgments of God, which

which none are able fully to Explain.

1. When God forbears to Afflict, and to restrain men from sin, by the Rod of Correction, and the Rebukes of his Providence: Or doth not sanctifie such Rebukes for their Reformation. We little think whither we should wander, if God did *not hedg up our ways with Thorns*, *Hos.* 2. 6, 7. If he did not by his Providence make a Wall, that we should not be able to find our sinful Paths; that we should not be able to make Provision for our Lusts at an easy rate, or have so much fewel for them as we desire. My People *Israel*, says God by the Prophet, was resolved to go after her Lovers; but God says, I will make her return back in confusion. She shall find an impassable hedge of Thorns in her way; I will stop her Course, I will make *a Wall, and a Wall*, as in the Original, and she shall not find her Paths. *Tho she follow after her Lovers, she shall not overtake them, she shall seek them but shall not find them.*

The like Expression you have 3. *Lament.* 7, 9. *He hath hedged me about that I cannot get out, he hath inclosed me with hewen stone.* Some by the Fetters of Education,

Education, as they call it, and are glad when they can shake them off; Some by the want of Money, or Interest, or Power, to accomplish their wicked Purposes, have their Way hedged up. Sometimes by bodily Pains, and sickness, God *opens the Ears of men, and seals Instruction to them, that he may withdraw Man from his Purpose, and hide Pride from Man*, Job 33. 17, 18. God is herein very merciful to many. Young Persons especially should consider it, to whom it is a Kindness to have *sin* made *difficult* to them: For if they had *so much Liberty* as they would desire, and *so much Money* at command as they could wish, and were let alone by their Superiours to do as they please, and live as they list, without any check, or fear of losing the favour of those on whom they depend, or from whom they have their Expectation; If things were thus with them, they know not unto what Excess and Height of sin they should run. So for Health, and Bodily strength, the abating of these may be a merciful Restraint from some sort of sins. The very weakness of our Constitutions, may be a means to save us from some kind of Temptations,

trations, which others in vigorous Health do struggle with, and are overcome by. So for disappointments in the World, Discountenance and Disgrace, and other such things, that are apt to humble and afflict the Mind. The more of *these Restraints* God is pleased to take from us, it may so fall out, that *the more Angry* he therein appeares to be. Especially if former afflictive Rebukes of Providence, have been misimproved: There being hardly a more terrible place in the whole Bible, than that threatening of God, *Hos.* 4. 13, 14. *Your Daughters shall commit Whoredom, and your Spouses shall commit Adultery; And I will not punish your Daughters when they commit Whoredom, nor your Spouses when they commit Adultery. O quanta Pœna, nulla Pœna!* It is the greatest Judgment, or the fore-runner of that which is so, when God abstains from punishing, when by timely Chastisement he does not awaken to Repentance, and stop sinners in their career; when the way to Hell is plain, and easy to them; when there is no Thorn, no Obstacle in the way, but they may smoothly go on, and walk after their own Counsels, in the Paths

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that lead to the Chambers of Death.

How many *Young Persons* hath God been kind to, by those Restraints of Providence, which he takes off from others? How hath he hedged and walled up your Way? He hath made it more difficult for you to sin; you cannot do as others, without suffering more than they; either in your Reputation, or your temporal Interest, or your Health, &c. And yet we find, notwithstanding all this, many such will not be divorced from their beloved Lusts. As one of the Antients speaks concerning *Philotimus*, who had weakened his Constitution, and impaired his Health, as the Effect of his Intemperance and Riot: And being told by the Physicians, that if he would not forbear, and presently break off his licentious Course, that he must certainly lose his *Eye-sight*: There was no help for him, but in a little time he would be Blind: He presently answers the Physician thus, *Valeat lumen amicum*, Farewell, O pleasant and desirable Light, rather than not sin on, as I have done, I am content never to behold the Light of the Sun more. Will the Blessed God, think you, be *unrighteous*,

if he condemn such resolved sinners to everlasting Darkness? Or to give them up now to those Lusts, that they are so madly set upon?

But where he hath Designs of Mercy to any, he will not leave them to go on without Correction. *As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.* If you will not be reclaimed by *one Rod*, you shall have *another*, and a *third* and a *fourth*. If you will not for all this turn to the Lord, I will yet punish you *seven times more for your Iniquities, Levit.* 26. 18. In these Cases, God doth not spare that he may spare; he doth not seem to have Mercy, that he may have Mercy; He doth not forbear his Rod, that we may forbear our sins; He will not let us alone, that he may not be forced utterly to abandon us: He will rebuke and chasten, that we may not harden our selves unto our Eternal Ruine.

Whenever you behold a wicked Person thrive and flourish in the World, when you see him prosper in his Trade, and boasting of his Riches, priding himself in his Power; when you see him strong and healthful, surrounded with all that is desirable to flesh and blood, flourishing with all variety

Variety of outward Blessings, personal and family Advantages, &c. And yet neglect God, and wallow in all manner of carnal Impurities, restrain Prayer from the Almighty, in his Family, and in his Closet, and live like a Beast, without God in the World; When you behold such spectacles, think of the Accomplishment of such like Scriptures, where God threatens in Anger to forbear to punish such and such men. This is *the first Method*, his forbearing to afflict.

2. By taking away the External Means of Knowledg and Grace, or otherwise disposing of Persons so as they cannot enjoy such seasons. Acts 19. 9. *When divers were hardned, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them.* God continues not the outward means in such places, or the persons remove into remote parts of the world, where the Gospel of Christ is not known. Thus when lewd and disobedient Youths have sinned against God and their Parents, to that degree, that they know not what to do with them, they either go of themselves, or are sent into the *Fleet*, or *Army*, or to the

Indies, to such Places, where the Gospel is not preached. And by this means men are left to walk in their own Counsels; The Publick Ministery of the Word being the ordinary Means of Sanctification. And so 'tis no wonder if they greedily fulfill their brutish Lusts. Therefore if God withdraw such a Ministery from the Place where you reside, or you run madly and without a call, or warrant, to dwell in such places where it cannot be had, (I mean such a Ministery as is proper to enlighten and awaken, and strive with you in order to your Conversion and your salvation,) it is one step to your being given over, and left of God, and to have the things of your Peace hid from your Eyes. I wish *Merchants*, and *Traders*, and *Parents* that have undutiful Children, and some Others, who are resolved *They will be Rich*, would consider this.

But if you have sat under a convincing lively Ministry, but you begin to dislike it; in that case it looks very ill. Especially the more you were affected with it formerly, and now distrelish it, or despise it. In such Cases, the means of holy Knowledge and

Sanctifi-

Sanctification not being continued, or improved, it looks fearful as to such Persons: More especially if They be unaffected, and unconcerned at their own Danger in these Circumstances.

3. God is said to pour upon men a Spirit of Slumber, and deep Sleep, to suffer them to harden their Hearts, and stupify their own Consciences the more, by every thing they enjoy; so that though the external Means be continued, yet none of the divine Messages will be received, nor the most useful Ministry do them any good: nor the Providential goodness of God lead them to Repentance. All their earthly possessions, and temporal Blessings shall become snares, and stumbling blocks, *Jer.* 6. 21. *Therefore thus saith the Lord, behold, I will lay stumbling blocks before this People, and the fathers and the sons together shall fall upon them: The neighbour and his friend shall perish.* But this is after they have wilfully hardened themselves. So it was with *Pharoah* when he had obstinately *hardened his own Heart*, *Exod.* 7. 14. 8. *chap.* 19, 32. *ver.* After that, upon his continued Obstinacy, God declares that *he hardened him*, 9. *chap.* 12. and 16. *ver.* And caused him to stand up, or *raised him up*, that is, kept him alive, when he

deserved to be cut off by a quick and sudden Destruction; for this very end, *that he might shew in him his Power*. So provoking was his former Obstinacy, and Incorrigibleness. Thus are men the faulty Cause, by chosen wilful Blindness and Hardness, before they are forsaken, and left of God under such a Judgment.

4. Another step is God's righteous Refusal to continue that Influence of the divine *Spirit*, with the external Means of Grace, which men have abused and forfeited. Without this Influence there cannot be a Day of *Light* and *Power* under the Gospel Dispensation: Both which are necessary to make our day of Grace. But when any People or Person have rebelled against God, and vexed his holy Spirit, he may cease to strive with their Hearts by any gracious Influence: When he hath knocked often, and they would not open; such inward Motions of the Spirit, as they formerly had, they may have no more; and so they are forsaken of God. But whether *totally* and *finally*, so as not to return again, is more than we can say of particular Persons, till the Event shew it. But it is that which Men have reason to fear, according to the ordinary Methods of Gods

Gods proceeding, who now disobey the Voice of his Word and Spirit. He might Justly withdraw the Influence of his Spirit from them, and seal them up to Destruction; and so it is possible their Day of Grace may be ended *before they dye*; and their not believing or being converted, will certainly follow, *John* 12. 39, 40.

5. Another step is, when *God sends strong Delusions, whereby men believe Lyes, that they may be damned*, 2 *Thess.* 2. 11. This is severe indeed, but being after obstinate Refusal of his Grace, it is righteous severity. For this is threatened as the Punishment of backsliding Christian Churches, against such who would not receive the Truth in the Love of it. *The Deceived and the Deceiver are his*, *Job* 12. 16.

Now God may do this two ways; *First*, By permitting Deceivers, and false Teachers, to speak and act at that rate of Cunning, and colour of Truth, that it is very difficult to resist or withstand the snare. And therefore we read of the coming of the Man of sin *with all signs, and lying Wonders*, or with Wonders to confirm those Lyes. This God foretold and warned the *Jews* of before hand.

2. God may give Men up to ſtrong Deluſions, by taking away the Aſſiſtance of Reaſon and a clear Judgment, to diſtinguiſh between things that differ. Thus Men *wreſt the holy Scriptures to their own Deſtruction*, 2 *Pet.* 3. 16. Which they could not do without his Providence, and Permiſſion. And when the Gentiles had ſinned highly againſt the Light of Nature, God gave them over to *a Reprobate Mind*, *Rom.* 1. 26. or to a mind uncapable of Judging, as the word imports; a blind unjudicious Mind, that could not examine, or diſtinguiſh between Truth and Falſhood. This is as conſiſtent with the Juſtice of God (conſidering it as the Puniſhment of former Guilt,) as the depriving us of any of our ſenſes would be.

And without ſome ſuch thing as this, it will be impoſſible to give an Account of the Growth, and Prevalency of the many ridiculous, abſurd Doctrines, and Practices of *Popery*. It cannot otherwiſe be accounted for, that ſuch Fooleries as are to be found in their Opinions and Worſhip, ſhould ever be received, believed, complied, with, and pleaded for, by Men otherwiſe of Judgment and Learning; But it

it is to be feared that they are *given over to ſtrong Deluſions to believe Lyes.*

There are many others that are no Papiſts, whom this may concern, who, after a great Profeſſion, have fallen back into ſecret Wickedneſs, and at laſt into more open Crimes, againſt Convictions and Reſolutions, Promiſes and former Experience. Many ſuch in the laſt Age, and ſome in this, have been thus left of God, to run into ſtrange Enthuſiaſm, and real Fanaticiſm, to receive the moſt extravagant, and ſometimes blaſphemous Opinions; to eſpouſe and plead for them, againſt the plaineſt Reaſon, and the moſt expreſs Scripture that can be. But uſually it may be obſerved, the Doctrines they receive, and the new Lights they follow, are ſuch as tend to Licentiouſneſs, to encourage the Gratification of their Luſts, that they can ſin on by the help of theſe Opinions, with greater Security and Peace. This is another ſtep, whereby men are given up to their own Hearts Luſts.

LASTLY, When God gives ſpecial Permiſſion to *the Devil*, the great Enemy of Souls, to exert his Power, and Malice, in blinding and deſtroying Sinners.

We

We do not sufficiently consider what we owe to Gods Restraint of *Satan*, that we are not more successfully tempted to deny the Faith, and cast off the yoke of Christ. When the Spirit of the Lord departed from *Saul*, an Evil Spirit from the Lord is sent to trouble and punish him, and *Satan* filled his heart with Rage and Cruelty, 1 *Sam.* 16. 14. Some evil Spirit had leave from God to seduce *Ahab*, 1 *Kings* 22. 21, 22. Who acted his part succesfully to deceive and destroy. *If our Gospel be hid*, says our Apostle, *it is hid to them that are lost*, 2 *Cor.* 3. 4. *Whose eyes are blinded by the God of this World.*

HE is ready to do us all the mischief he can, if God restrain him not. What a Power had he over *the Bodies* of some Men, in the days of our Saviour! He would manifest as much over their *Souls* too, if God did but give him leave. The Red Dragon went out to deceive the Nations, we read in the *Apocalyps.* As to those who are judicially left of God, and given up to their own Hearts Lusts, it may come to this, and sometimes doth so; that God leaves them to the Power of *Satan* to deceive and ruine

ine them, and *they are led captive by him at his will.* How dismal must the Case of such Persons be! Which brings me to consider,

III. THE Severity of this Judgment. Besides what has been said concerning it already, let me add a few Particulars.

1. The Severity of this Judgment will appear, if we consider that it is never inflicted but after many preceeding Provocations, upon habitual and obstinate sinners. For sins against Light and Knowledge, presumptuous and repeated Transgressions, such for which there was no sacrifice appointed under the Law, *Numb:* 15. 30.

2. The Severity of this Judgment may be argued from the Subject of it, it falls upon *the Soul*, it doth especially respect *that*, as its immediate Subject. The dismal Effects of it reach to the Soul: The Beauty and Comeliness of the Soul is hereby spoiled: For what more dismal Spectacle can there be, than such a man thus left of God? The Honour and Dignity of the Soul is hereby debased; for men given up to their own Hearts Lusts are almost transformed into Beasts.

3. Be-

3. Because the most dishonourable *Slavery* follows upon it. They are left under the Power and Rage of their own Lusts; and did you know what a *Slavery* that is, you would rather beg of *God* that you might fall into the Hands of the most barbarous and cruel Tyrant in the World, than to be left under the Dominion of your own Lusts.

4. Because they are *left to walk in their own Counsels*, as the fruit of their being given up to their own Lusts. And these are, *First*, The most foolish blind Guides that can be, that fill men with vain Projects and Designs. As the rich Fool in the Gospel, *Luke.* 16. He would pull down his Barns, and build greater, and say, *Soul take thine ease*, &c.

Secondly, They are false and treacherous Guides. They promise Peace and Happiness, but procure nothing like it; Promise Ease and Rest, but can by no means perform what they promise; but leave a man to wander and go astray unto his own Destruction, *Prov.* 5. 31.

Thirdly, They are cruel and pernicious Guides, as well as deceitful ones. Such Persons will walk in the way that leads

leads to Destruction: He that walketh after his own Counsel, will find the End of that way to be Death.

Lastly, The Severity of this Judgment will appear, in that it can never be inflicted but *in Anger*. This is the Fruit of divine Wrath. All other Calamities and Afflictions may be the Fruit of Love, may be sanctified for our good, may turn to our Advantage: But this Calamity has no such Original, and no such Effect. A man may be given up to *Satan* for the Destruction of the Flesh, that the Soul may be saved; But to be given up to sin is a thousand times worse, because that is the Fruit of Divine Anger, in order to the Damnation of the Soul. Here God wounds like an Enemy, and like a cruel one: And we may boldly say, *God never punished any Man or Woman, with this Spiritual Judgment, in Kindness and Love.*

The

The Third Sermon.

Psalm LXXXI. 12.

So I gave them up to their own Hearts lusts: and they walked in their own Counsels.

UPON the Rehearsal of some terrible Threatning, when Judgment is denounced, or signified to be approaching, but the particular Persons are not named, who are to be the Subjects of it, we may use the Words of the Prophet *Daniel*, *chap* 4. 29. Before he opened to the King the Import and sense of his ominous Dream; *The Dream be to them that hate thee, O King! and the Interpretation thereof unto thine Enemies.* But

But such is the Severity and Horrour of this threatned Judgment in the Text, that we should not, we ought not to wish so much Evil to our worst Enemies; but do what we can to prevent it. For of all Calamities that can be threatned, or inflicted in this World, what can be worse than for a Man to be given up to his own Lusts, and left to walk in his own Counsels? Two or three things we may observe by way of *general Inference*, before I speak to some particular Cases and Questions that relate hereto.

1. HOW Much to be pitied is the Ignorance and Folly of sinners, that are afraid of any other Calamity more than this. *I gave 'em up to their own Hearts Lusts*, is a thousand times worse than if God had given 'em up to the *Syrians* to spoil 'em, or to their most enraged Adversaries to oppress 'em. Men are ready to quake and tremble, and their Hearts to be moved, as the Trees of the Wood are moved with the Wind, if a thick or dark Cloud hover over them, as to publick or private Affairs. If their Health and Ease, their Liberties and Estates, their outward Priviledges and Advantages

tages are threatened and endangered, they presently apprehend themselves concerned to look about them, and do their utmost to prevent it. But if sin be the greatest Enemy, to be given up to sin is the greatest Judgment, and should be more feared than Plague, or Pestilence, or Famine, or War, or any of those Calamities, that Nations and Persons do commonly dread as most Formidable Evils.

2. Is it the greatest Judgment to be given up to our own Hearts Lusts? How unreasonable is the Displeasure and Anger of Men at the sharpest Methods of Divine Grace, that would bring them to Repentance, and thereby prevent this sad Catastrophe? The most smart Reproofs of the Word; the most close Exhortations, and Admonitions of Ministers, that are now accounted troublesome, the most pungent and uneasy Convictions of Conscience, and the most afflictive Rebukes of Providence too, that have this merciful Design and Tendency, they are the real Effects of Kindness, as preventive of a greater Mischief, even this, of being left of God, and given up to our own Hearts Lusts.

What Enemies therefore are they to their own Intereſt, who uſe ſuch Language as that of the Stubborn *Jews*, *Iſa.* 30. 10. ſaying to the Prophets, *Prophecie not unto us Right things, ſpeak unto us ſmooth things, and prophecie Deceits.* Till God in righteous Judgment reſolve, and ſay, as he did afterwards, *Ezek* 3. 26. *Thou ſhalt no longer be unto them a Reprover, Thou ſhalt be dumb, and thy Tongue cleave to the Roof of thy mouth, for they are a rebellious Houſe.* When ſuch as would convince and awaken Men by neceſſary Reproofs, are diſliked, and their Preaching reckoned *a Burden*, becauſe *the Earth is tormented with their Words*, *Revel.* 11. 10.

3. HOW wretched and dangerous is their Miſtake, who think their Caſe good, becauſe their *Conſciences* now trouble them no more. They have ſinned themſelves into ſuch hardneſs of Heart, and ſearedneſs of Conſcience, under ſuch Judicial Blindneſs and ſtupidity, that the ſin, which was formerly burdenſom as a Mountain, they now feel not; they bewail it not. *Conſcience*, that did rebuke them, is now ſilent and faſt aſleep. All things are at peace with them, *they ſay*, and they are

are glad of it, and ſo is the Devil too. God lets them proſper in the World, they have no rub in their way, to Hell. But in the mean time he hath given them over, that they ſhall not be ſmitten any more; that they ſhall not be troubled with the ſtrivings of his Spirit any more. Neither Word nor Rod ſhall do them good more. They applaud themſelves in this, and rejoyce in it: But if to be given up to our own Hearts Luſts be the greateſt Judgment, there is no ſtorm more diſmal than ſuch a Calm, or more to be dreaded. No Trouble but is better than ſuch Peace: No Sickneſs but is preferable to ſuch Health: No Sorrow but is rather to be choſen than ſuch mad Joy.

Doubt. 1. BUT becauſe I would not break the bruiſed Reed, or quench the ſmoking Flax, or ſadden the Hearts of thoſe whom God would not have ſaddened; but rather awaken the Joy, and aſſiſt the Conſolation, and promote the ſpiritual Peace of thoſe unto whom it doth of right belong: I ſhall therefore conſider ſome of the Doubts, and Objections of ſeve-

ral weak, or melancholy, dejected Christians, who on all Occasions argue against themselves, and conclude hardly of their own State, from every word of Threatening and Terrour against the Ungodly: As melancholy People can hardly hear any Disease talked of, or described, but they presently imagin they have some of the Symptoms of it in their Case.

WHAT I have said of the Nature and Terrour of this Judgment, and of the Methods of Divine Justice in the Execution of it, may make some ready to say.

"I fear lest God hath given me "up, for I have resisted many of the "strivings of the Spirit of Grace, and "now I think he doth not strive with "me any more. I have been under "the Rod, and not bettered by it, the "Spirit of slumber and of a deep sleep "seems to possess me. I have out-"stood many Calls to Repentance, "and stifled many Convictions of "Conscience, and contradicted many "good Resolutions, and broken many "Vows and Promises; I have back-"sliden and revolted from God after

"very

"very hopeful Beginnings: Therefore "the Punishment of Apostates may "justly be inflicted on me. I, that "have tasted the good Word of God, "and of the Powers of the World to "come, may well fear being left of "God, so as it should be impossible for "me to be renewed by Repentance, "*Heb.* 6. 7.

"*My Day of Grace is over, saith Ano-*"*ther, my accepted Time* past, there is "nothing so bad but I may justly fear "it: For I find I grow worse and "worse, instead of making progress "in Holiness: whereas if my Grace "were true it would be growing. But "I find my Corruptions exceeding "strong, my heart very dead and "hard, *&c.*

"Doubtless God has withdrawn his "Spirit from me, will *Another say*, "I have not the Covenant Blessing of "a soft Heart, a Heart of Flesh; I can-"not weep a Tear for my sins, as once "I could: I am good for nothing, un-"fit for any spiritual Duty; None in "the World have such a treacherous "vile abominable Heart as I have, I "am afraid God has given me over;

"I do not know but I may have sin-
"ned *the sin unto Death*, the unpar-
"donable sin, the sin against the Holy
"Ghost, which shall never be forgiven.

Answ. THIS being a complicated Case, comprehending the objections of several People, wherein are some things that deserve *Pity*, and others that need *Reproof*; there being somewhat very sad in it, and somewhat very faulty too; It is manifest that my Reply must be mixed: It must in part be monitory and reprehensive, and in part consolatory. For Reproof and Counsel are necessary, as well as Encouragment and Comfort. I shall endeavour to intermix both, in the following particulars, by way of Answer.

1. CONSIDER, That to be under very great Darkness, Doubts, and Fears, so as to create much Trouble and Torment to your selves, will not of it self conclude your Case desperate, and your Souls finally forsaken. There are many Reasons for Soul trouble, the Children of Light may walk in Darkness. You may judge and condemn your selves for Unbelievers and Reprobates, and yet unjustly do so.

You

You may refuse to be comforted, and say all that the Devil speaks against you to be true, and that it is impossible for such a one, *as you*, to find Mercy: And yet all this may be false and faulty, and those Clouds may afterwards vanish, Light appear, and Joy return. The Examples in Scripture, and the Experience of every Age will testifie this.

It may be your mistake about the Nature of *Faith*, and make it to consist in *Assurance*, not distinguishing between the *direct* and the *reflex Act* of Faith. Whereas if true Faith consist in *Assurance*, and without Faith there is no salvation; A Man must be assured of his Salvation, or else he must necessarily be damned. And this is to suppose that a Man must *First* be sure of Heaven, before he can be capable of it. But you may be in Christ, and have the Image of Christ, and the Characters of his Children, and shall be kept by the Power of God unto Salvation; though for a time you may distrust, and despair of it, walk mournfully, and refuse to be comforted. Your own Doubts and Fears will not

prove that you are given over, but rather the Contrary. For,

II. If you are given up to your own Hearts Lusts, how is it that you thus mourn, and greive at the Apprehension and Fear of it? Do you not value his Favour more than Life? And dread his Displeasure more than Death? and fear nothing more than that God should forsake you? And is it likely that *Such* are left of God, who hereby discover that they love him in Sincerity? Your very Solicitude, and Fear, and Disquiet, lest God should finally reject you, and cast you off, is an Argument that *he hath not*; and, if you continue of this Mind, that *he never will.*

Believe it, *O doubting Christian,* if thou art from thy Soul unwilling to leave God, and of all things in the World dost dread and deprecate his leaving thee, He hath not left thee, or given thee over. For be assured of this, *God never did, or will forsake any, but those who first forsake him, and are unwilling to Return.* Where do you ever find, or how can it possibly be, that such a Mans Day of Grace

Grace is paſt, and the time of his Viſitation over, that God hath Judicially left him, and given him up, who values the Preſence of God, and fears nothing more than to Sin againſt him, or to provoke him to caſt him off? Is ſuch a Man loſt, and given over, who thirſteth after God, and can be ſatisfied with nothing ſhort of him? Where do you ever find, that God did ever finally leave a Man, and leave any ſuch Grace behind him?

Is ſuch a Man *loſt*, and given up by God? Who prefers the Light of his Countenance before Corn, and Wine, and Oil, and all the Riches, Treaſures, and Honours of the World; Who had rather live in the moſt mean miſerable, afflictive Condition on Earth, with the Love and Favour of God, than enjoy the greateſt Abundance of all things without it. I ſhall amplifie this more preſently under the *ſixth* Head.

III. LET me ask you, Are you not reſolved to hold on your Fight and Warfare againſt ſin? To continue and maintain your Conflict, notwithſtanding

ing

ing all your Doubts, and all your Complaints? You may ſometimes take *being tempted* for being *overcome*. But though Temptations have been too prevalent, and many of your Reſolutions and Purpoſes againſt ſin have been broken; Are you reſolved to ſtruggle no more, to reſiſt no longer? Dare you ſay upon ſerious Deliberation, 'Well, now I ſee 'my Caſe is hopeleſs, I will uſe no 'more Means againſt the Devil and 'ſin, I will pray to God no more, I 'will hear, and read his Word no 'more, I will attend upon the Ordi-'nances of the Goſpel no longer, it is 'all to no purpoſe? I know you durſt not ſay this, nor talk at this rate.

Beſides, when you have fallen into ſin through the Prevalency of a Temtation, do you not make haſte to riſe again by bitter Repentance? Do you not freely confeſs, and aggravate your ſins in the Preſence of God, and not palliate, cover, or excuſe them? Are you not uneaſy, and reſtleſs under your Declenſions? Deſirous to make your Peace with God, and to be reconciled through Chriſt? Do you not double your

your Guard, and Watch afterwards? Do you not still love Holiness, and the Image of God, wherever you see it? Do you not check, and chide, and find fault with your selves, for your ungrateful Carriage to the God of Love? Are you not displeased with your selves? And ashamed of your selves? And glad of any Help and Assistance that leads to your Recovery? If this be your Case, be assured your Day of Grace is not past, you are not left of God.

IV. YOU say, you cannot weep, and mourn, and express your Repentance, as formerly, and as some others you know do; Yet consider that it is the hatred of sin, and watchfulness against it, that is the truest sign of Repentance and godly sorrow. For to use the words of Mr. *B. He that will be at the greatest Cost and Pains to be rid of sin, or that he had not sinned, or that he might sin no more, though he have not such command of Tears as Others, is the truest Penitent.* You cannot weep for sin as Others, but you would give all the World to be rid of sin, you could wish that when you

you had dishonoured God by *Sin*, you had spent that time in *Suffering*, and if it were to do again, upon the same Reasons and Inducements, you would not do it. And if you might but please and obey God more than formerly, and be kept from disobeying him, you would be content with any thing. Judge your selves by this.

Besides * God hath not told us just what degree and measure of Humiliation and Sorrow for sin is absolutely needful. Some have more, and others less even of true Penitents.

TAKE heed of mistaking the Case concerning *the Day of Grace* being *over*, and sinners being finally left of God. For it is never true in this Life, that any are so left of God, and their Day of Grace so over, as that if they truly repent, and turn to him, he will not accept them. This would be against the whole tenour of the Gospel Covenant: For whosoever turns to God by true Repentance, and Faith in Jesus Christ, *shall not perish but have eternal Life.*

* *See* Dr: *Collings Cordial for a Fainting Soul, part* 1. *Serm.* 2.

But

But there is another ſenſe of ſuch Expreſſions, that is, when men have ſo long reſiſted the Spirit, and refuſed the offers of Gods Grace, and rejected the Yoke and Government of Chriſt, that God reſolves *to let them alone*, never to give them the prevailing Grace of his Spirit, but in righteous Judgment to abandon them to their own Hearts Luſts, to walk in their own Counſels.

Becauſe they would not turn at my Reproof, *they ſhall call, but I will not anſwer, ſeek me earneſtly, but not find me*, Prov. 1.28. If men harden their Hearts, and will not hear and obey the voice of God, He may ſware in his Wrath, that they ſhall not enter into his Reſt. *Heb.* 3. 11, 15, 18. *Num.* 12. 22. *Ezek.* 24. 13. It may be this very day, or hour, while now thou art called by God to Turn and Live, if thou refuſe *now*, thy Day may be over, and paſt for ever. To morrow God may ſay, *Let him Alone, he ſhall not be purged, he ſhall dye in his ſins. Iſa.* 42. 14. *Hoſ.* 4. 17. This is a poſſible Caſe, but who can tell when it is thus? How can this be known of particular Perſons when it is ſo, though ſome Approach nearer

nearer to it than Others? How can it positively be said of any, that God will never give such Persons Repentance unto Life? You may be sure, that if you find your Hearts Penitent, and willing to return to him, that it doth not reach you: It is not your Case. Therefore,

VI. YOU that thus complain and fear, have you not many of the Fruits of the Spirit visible, and manifest in you? Therefore the Spirit of Christ hath not left you; God hath not given you over. Do you not esteem and prize the GRACE of the Gospel? Do you not cry to Heaven for the Spirit of *Grace*? Are you not earnest in the seeking the Spirit of Holiness from day to day? Whence is it, but from *Grace*, that you have an Heart to prize and seek it? They that have outstood the Day of Grace, they despise it; they are sunk into Carnality, and Forgetfulness of God; they are insensible, and stupid, and unconcerned about *his Grace*. But for you that value it, and seek it, your Day of Grace cannot be over: For it is from

from *Common Grace*, at leaſt, which has a tendency to *Special*, and ſhows your Caſe not to be like thoſe, who are given up of God.

But with moſt that thus complain, there is more than common Grace: There are Fruits of ſpecial Grace viſible. You do unfeignedly Repent, and mourn for Sin; and deſire to give up your ſelves to Chriſt. Now what but *Grace* hath made you to ſee the evil of ſin, and hate it? What but *Grace* hath made you willing to Accept of Chriſt, for your Lord and Saviour? What but *Grace* has made you value the Favour of God, and a holy Heart and Life, above all the World? How is it that you are brought to love God, and delight in him, to ſeek after him, and deſire to pleaſe him, and to be troubled that you can do ſo no more, no better? For ſuch as you to ſay *your Day of Grace is over*, is as abſurd, as one expreſſeth it, as for a Man to come into our Aſſemblies, and hear the Sermon, and then go away lamenting that the Sermon was done before he came. You have received that Grace, which you complain you want.

You

You know 'tis otherwise with Many. Were you like them; Did you find your Lusts and Passions lead you captive at their pleasure; had you no Affections stirring after God, and Holiness; did you despise Christ, and all Regard and Duty to him; and could not perswade your selves to hear, or read, or pray, or think of another World, or do any thing to provide for it, you might then fear indeed what the issue of your Case would be.

But that is not the Case I am now speaking of; nor of any, I hope, that now hear me, your Appearance in these Assemblies is some sign of the contrary: And though as yet you may be unconverted, and unsanctified, if you are so far Awake, as to look after Reconciliation to God; if you are touched with a sense of your sin and Danger, so as to desire to be assisted, and enabled to Repent, and turn to the Lord; how bad soever your present Case be, it is *not Desperate*, and *Remediless*: For you are in the way of Mercy, and nothing but your own wilful, impenitent refusal of Mercy, can deprive you of it.

VII. As

VII. As to the Complaint of *an Hard Heart*, Remember it is the *Impenitent*, and the *Unperswadable Heart* that is the only Hard Heart you need to fear. They that are obstinate, and disobedient, intractable and incorrigible; as the People of the *Jews* were, that neither regarded the divine Threatnings or Promises, or minded his Precepts; These are they that are under *Hardness of Heart*. This is the Judgment you ought to fear, to be left under such a Temper. But you find it otherwise with you, that the voice of God doth awe, and command you: Your Wills are bowed unto Subjection to him; you are willing to take upon you the Yoke of Christ, or have taken it; and renouncing all Competitors, you desire to chuse Christ for your Lord and Saviour, and that God in Christ should be your Ruler, and your Felicity. If it be thus, you may be sure you are not left of God.

VIII. THAT Sight of sin, and sense of the Burthen of Corruption, which you complain of, as the Ground of your fear, will argue the direct con-

trary to what you alledge it for. For ſin has always the greateſt ſtrength where the ſinner is the leaſt Apprehenſive and Senſible of it. There is more hope of a ſenſible Patient, that feels his ſickneſs, and complains of it, than of one that feels nothing, but is confident all is well. Is not their Caſe much worſe, who feel nothing of the Evil of ſin, to whom the Power of it is not troubleſome, nor the Pollution of it lothſom, nor the Guilt of it burthenſom? While it is otherwiſe with you, you may be aſſured you are not given over, and left of God, and your Day of Grace paſt: It is yet *Day* with you, or elſe how came you by ſo much *Light* to ſee the evil of ſin more than formerly, and to ſee ſo many things to be ſin, which before you did not?

Though there may and will be a Conflict between Fleſh and Spirit, Corruption and Grace, in the beſt, while in this World; yet which Party doſt thou ſide with? Which has thy moſt willing Conſent? Which way is thy prevailing Deſire, Love, and Choice? Doſt thou not bewail the Body of ſin and Death? And wiſh to be

be delivered from Corruption more perfectly? To gain a more intire Victory? Doſt thou not watch, and wreſtle, and ſtrive, and pray againſt it from day to day? Is this the true ſtate of thy Caſe? Then never think thou art left of God.

As to *Some* of you, I may go further; and deſire you to look back upon your former Humiliations for ſin, when *Firſt* you turned to God. Though all have not the ſame ſenſible Degree of Humiliation; yet hath not the Spirit of Grace convinced you of the Holineſs and Equity of the Law of God? And of your own wretched, accurſed Condition under the Guilt of ſin? Have you not been brought, to tremble at the thoughts of his righteous Vengence? So as to diſreliſh all the Pleaſures of this World, by reaſon of the ſenſe of ſin; ſeeing no way out of this Perplexity, but by the free, and unconceivable Mercy of God in Chriſt; and therefore Renouncing all things that might ſeparate between Chriſt and thee, ready to part with all thy Luſts, and Pleaſures, and Profits, and Honours, Thou were made willing to ac-

cept of his Mercy on his own Terms; crying earnestly for pardoning, and sanctifying Grace, acknowledging thy Unworthiness of the least Favour; owning the righteousness of God, if he should condemn thee; and yet, upon the Invitation and Call of the Gospel, looking up to his Mercy-seat with Hope, Resolving there to anchor and take no Denial.

Now after all this, and *the Covenant Dedication* of your selves to God in Christ, that followed upon it, and some Calmness and stability of Soul consequent thereto, will you question all again? Because Corruption is not quite mortified, nor Sin quite destroyed? Even that sense of remaining Sin that you make the matter of your Objection against your selves, is an Argument for you, and will conclude the Contrary to what you alledge it for.

IX. THO You cannot say so much, as to present sense, of your Hatred of sin and Loathing of it, as you desire; yet examine your selves as to *the Sins of Others*, and what sense you have

have of the Dishonour of God by them. We may sometimes gather matter of Comfort this way, concerning our own Sincerity, and Love to God, when we cannot so well have it nearer home. As bad as thou art, or thinkest thy self to be; Art thou not tender of the Honour of God? Art thou not concerned for his Interest and Glory? Doth not thy soul tremble, and thine Heart ake when the Being of God is denied, or his Sacred Name blasphemed, or the Glory of the Mediator Struck at, and the Authority of his Gospel questioned, by the Atheists, and Saducees, and Infidels of the Age? Or the Progress of it obstracted?

Doth not thy Heart rise within thee, if thou happen into wicked Company, where the Word of God, his Institutions, his Ministers, and Servants are vilified and reproached, and bold Impieties vented, and vile Impurities boasted of? *&c.*

X. BUT I do *not Grow*, I rather wax worse, will some say. As to that, Consider; that though there be Pre-

cepts, Promises, and Examples of growing in Grace, that shew what is Gods usual way, and the Proper Tendency of the Spiritual Life; yet those Promises are not so Absolute, without any Condition, as that there is no true Believer who doth not alwaies grow in *Grace*: For Experience shews, that some decline and lose their first Fervour, and need to be awakened to Repentance. The Promises of Growth and Faithfulness are not absolute, but depend on the Improvement of Grace received, and the Performance of many Duties, with great watchfulness and Diligence in our whole Christian Course. And many Christians, live not up to the Condition of the Accomplishment of such Promises, as concern the Growth and thriving of Spiritual Life. They decay, and decline through their own Carelessness, and Negligence.

Sensible Affections be sure, and vigorous Encrease in that respect, is not the true Measure, whereby to Judge of growth in Grace. For different Ages, and Tempers, and Circumstances of our condition in the world will

will make a great Difference in ſenſible Affections.

You may grow in Grace, by a more Judicious Eſteem, and value of God and Holineſs, Love to Chriſt and his Grace, and Glory, ſo as it may be harder for the Devil to draw you off from God, than before; even when you think you do not grow, you may be more ſtable and reſolved, though not ſo lively and affectionate. And the decay of natural ſtrength, and vigor of parts by old age or ſickneſs, may make a Difference with ſome. Your Humility, your ſelf denial, and Patience may encreaſe, when you think otherwiſe. And he who grows *more humble* thrives in every other Grace, whether he believe it, and take notice of it or no. But if you are declin'd, the Remedy muſt be to Awake, and to uſe Gods appointed Means to make you grow in Grace, and in the Knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, You cannot thereupon conclude that you have no Grace, much leſs that you are left of God, and given over. Such as enquire not whether they grow or decay, who

have little or no Concern about their own Case as to these things, have most reason to fear it of themselves, whilst such as do really grow, for a time, may not discern it. And sometimes others may observe it, when they themselves disown it, or perceive it not.

But if you are under some declension, Remember the cause, that it is from sloth and negligence in the use of God's appointed means for Encrease; from the want of daily Mortification of sin, and Watchfulness against it; from countenacing some Lust, so that its power is encreased, suffering the Love of the World to steal upon you, and conforming to it; giving way to Formality, and carelessness in divine Worship, and the Duties of Religion; and Apply the Remedy by Repentance, Mortification, and doing your first works, *Rev.* 3.1, 2. But make not hasty, unjust Conclusions concerning your final State.

XI. MOREOVER Consider, there may be much more of Blame and Faultiness, of Guilt and sin, in your

your unbelieving Objections, and Despondency, than you are aware of. Therefore while you complain of sin, take heed you do not encrease, and add to your sin by disobeying the command of God to *Believe* and *Hope*. God hath made *Hope* a positive Duty, and Gods Command were enough, if there were nothing else in your Case. Your *Despair*, as if your Case were desperate, and your Condition hopeless, that God had finally given you over, is a plain *sin*: And will you justifie it? He obliges you to *hope*; he hath not bid the Devil or the damned to hope, as he hath commanded you. It is *by hope we are saved*; and he takes Pleasure in them that hope in his Mercy.

But to convince you of this sin, consider what a Representation of the blessed God your Objection makes, as if he were not a God of Grace, pardoning Inquity, Transgression and Sin, upon Repentance, which is what he hath declared concerning himself. Now is it not a sin to believe God to be such an one, as is directly contrary to the Character he has given of himself?

ſelf? That though I never ſo much deſire his Favour, and value it as my Life; though I deſire to my utmoſt to comport with his Mind and Will, ſo far as he hath, or ſhall reveal it to me; to believe that yet he hath caſt me off, or will caſt me off: What a ſad Account of God does this give? What a Reproach upon him would this bring? Is not this to take the Devils Repreſentation of him to be truer than his own?

There is likewiſe further ſin in your Objection, and Doubt, by miſrepreſenting the Tenor of *the Goſpel Covenant*. Whereas *that* ſays, Take God in Chriſt for your God, and give up your ſelves to be his, and he is, and will be yours; you add ſomething more out of your own Head as neceſſary, and ſo alter the Terms of Life and Death. And what is this but to make a new Goſpel? The Bleſſed God hath ſaid, on ſuch Terms Souls ſhall be ſaved; you add others as neceſſary: And ſay, I ſhall never be ſaved, unleſs it be thus and thus with me; which God hath never ſaid. Though I do accept God for my God, and Chriſt for my Saviour,

and

and consent to be his, and endeavour to please him, yet he will not save me. This is to give God the Lye, and there is more Guilt in it than we think. Therefore.

XII. LAY this as a Foundation Truth, and keep it, That *you can never be more willing to Come to Christ, than he is to Receive you.* If you think otherwise, your seeming Humility in Doubting hath much of Pride in it. If you are willing to have Christ and his Grace on his Terms, *He is yours.* If you are willing to have Christ for your Saviour, and your King, *to receive him as Christ Jesus the Lord*; and the blessed Spirit as your Sanctifier; and had rather have his Favour, and Love, and his holy Image, than all the riches of this World; you are then *His*: If your Willingness be *prevailing*, and more than your Unwillingness.

For *Christ*, be assured, *is Willing*; He hath first shown his Willingness, He dyed to manifest it, and hath drawn up, procured, and published a Covenant of Grace, wherein he declares *his Consent*, and calls for *yours*.

There-

Therefore if there be not a Covenant Union unto Eternal Life between him and you, it is through *your* Refusal, not his.

Now if you are *not willing* to Accept his offered Grace, to be sanctified by him, and blessed in him; why do you complain, for the want of that which you would not have, and are not willing of? For I tell you again, *He is willing* to Receive, and Accept you, and to be *Yours* in an Everlasting Covenant never to be broken, if you are sincerely *Willing* to be *His Covenant Servants*. Moreover,

XII. AS to the Doubt concerning *the sin against the Holy Ghost*, I think such as make that Objection do not well understand wherein it lyes. Read the 12*th* of *Matthew* throughout, and *Mark* 3. 28, 29, 30. And you will find that the Sin against the Holy Ghost never to be forgiven, was to this purpose; That when, notwithstanding the Miracles of Christ, which confirmed his divine Commission, and proved him to be the Messiah, They who

who saw those Miracles of Christ, and could not deny them to be true; yet did not believe him to be the Son of God, or his Doctrine to be true, though attested by those Miracles. But rather than own him to be the Christ, they blasphemously ascribed his Miracles unto the Agency of the Devil, the unclean Spirit; That were wrought by the Power of the Holy Ghost.

They therefore who own Christ to be the Messiah, and his Gospel to be true; who do not take him for a Deceiver, but acknowledge him as their Lord, and honour and worship him as the Christ of God; they are not Guilty of the sin there mentioned, called *The sin against the Holy Ghost.*

I deny not but some may be guilty in our days of such Sins, as make *Approaches* unto this, and are somewhat like it; As when, notwithstanding clear Evidence of the Truth of the Gospel, Men resist the Light, and rebel against it, and turn open Apostates, and Persecutors, if not down right professed Infidels. But the sin against the Holy Ghost, there described by the Evangelist, seems to imply a Man's taking

taking Christ for a Deceiver. Be sure none who own the Gospel to be true, and Christ to be the Saviour of fallen sinners, are guilty of that Sin, though they may make dangerous Approaches to it.

Much less are they Guilty of it, who *fear* the guilt of this sin: But such doubting fearful Persons, who make this Question concerning themselves, because of some blasphemous Suggestions of *Satan*, &c. They would have been afraid of the Guilt of any other sin as well as of this, if they had ever heard, or read such dreadful things declared against any Other sin, as against This: But they seem not to understand the Nature of it.

* I do not deny but there may also be an *equivalent Evidence* of the Divinity of Christ, and of the Truth of the Gospel, that the Infidels of our Age may sin against; *Equivalent*, I say, to what *the Scribes* and *Pharisees* who where guilty of this sin, did sin against. And therefore our modern *Deists*,

* *See Mr.* Howe's *Append. to Redeemer's Tears.*

who

who reproach the blessed Redeemer, and the Holy Spirit of God, had need look to it, lest they approach unto the unpardonable sin, and God should give them over to their own Hearts Lusts. But as to poor doubting Christians, that fear they are guilty of the sin against the Holy Ghost, mentioned in the Gospel, It is plain enough, that they fearing the Guilt of it, are not in danger of it for the present, or like to be so.

LASTLY, To bring the whole matter to a short Issue, and to put it out of question, *that your day of Grace is not over*, and that God hath not left you, or given you over to your own Hearts Lusts; I do *now* tender you the Grace and Salvation purchased by Christ in his Name. If *now* you are heartily willing to accept it, the Case is determined: and determined in the best manner that can be. Therefore to put all out of doubt, *Accept the present offer of Gods Grace*, which is this day made you. Oppose not the greatness of your sins past, or the Aggravations of your present Unworthiness, but penitently, and humbly, and thank-

thankfully accept the Pardon that is offered you in the Name of Christ.

Do you think, in contradiction to the whole Gospel, that your sins are so many, or so great, that Christ did not, could not satisfie for them, and that he will not forgive them, if you Repent, and turn to God, and Believe on the Name of his Son? You are condemned by the Law; Christ came to save sinners, and such as were lost; and he requires no Worthiness, or Price in your Hands, but that you unfeignedly Consent to be his, to accept an offered Saviour, and his Salvation according to the Ends and Uses of the Covenant of Grace: That he may illuminate and teach you, sanctifie and guide you, govern and rule you, by his Word and Spirit. This is the *Condition* of your Title to the Blessings of the Covenant, and consequently must be the *Evidence* of your Title, and should be a satisfactory one.

But if you are Unwilling to forsake sin, and return to God by Jesus Christ; if you are unwilling to receive him as your Teacher, Sanctifier, Saviour

and

and Lord; you have reason to doubt your state indeed, or rather the matter is *past doubt*, you are unsanctified, and as yet unreconciled to God.

Whoever therefore, upon the account of their former Resistance of the Spirit, stifling Convictions, violating their good Resolutions, &c. Do question their State, whether God hath not given them over; yet let them Consider they are *now* invited, and entreated to put it out of question that their Day of Grace is not past, by letting this be *Their Accepted time, the Day of their Salvation*; by now heartily accepting an offered Saviour, and giving up themselves unto him. And then, notwithstanding all your former Refusals of his Mercy and Grace, if *now* at last you will return and submit, and take his yoke upon you; there is Ease, and Rest, and Pardon, and Comfort, and Life, Eternal Life to be had.

To conclude, Instead of Doubting, and Complaining, and questioning any longer, Reduce all that which is *Doubtful* with you, to that which is *Plain* and *Certain*. It is certain that God hath sent his Son into the World

to save sinners; It is certain that you are some of those lost, miserable, guilty Creatures that need this Salvation; It is certain that he has published the glad Tidings of the Gospel to such, that *whoever believeth shall be saved*; Is is certain that God cannot lye, it is therefore inconsistent with his Nature, that such as come to him in the Exercise of Repentance towards God, and Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, should not be Accepted with him.

Therefore dispute, and question, and complain no longer how matters have been, or how they are with you, but come in upon the Call and Invitation of the Gospel Grace: Remember the Covenant thou hast made with God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost in Baptism; Resign, yield and give up thy self with all thy Heart and Soul to be his, resolving that thou wilt throw thy self into the Arms of his Love, and Mercy, because it is the Command of God that you believe on his Son; Resolve that through his Mercy and Grace, by the help of his Spirit of Grace, you will *now* do so, whatever come of it.

Do not perplex your ſelves about the Queſtion, whether you did it not *formerly*, four, or five, or ten years ago? But do it again; Bleſſing God that you *may now* do it; that he has not repealed his Goſpel, and that he never will repeal it to the end of the World. I may Accept of his Son now, as well as ſo many years ago. Bleſſed be God, the Invitation, the Command, the Promiſe, is the ſame *now* as it was then; And to as many as Receive him, he will give the Priviledge to become the Sons of God, even to as many as believe on his Name. *Bleſſed be God for Jeſus Chriſt, and the Covenant of Grace.*

The Fourth Sermon.

Pſalm LXXXI. 12.

So I gave them up to their own Hearts luſts: and they walked in their own Counſels.

I Come now, in the laſt place, to conſider the Caſe of ſuch, who make *dangerous Approaches* towards ſuch a Judgment; Who have provoked God to that degree, that it would be no wonder if he ſhould give them up; yea, concerning whom, there is Reaſon to fear it, if ſpeedy Repentance do not prevent.

HAVING therefore, ſpoken 1. To the

Nature of this Judgment, And *Secondly*, considered the steps and Methods, whereby God does ordinarily inflict it, And *Thirdly*, the dreadful Severity of it, in Comparison of any other Judgment in this World; I proceeded to the Case of those who *Fear* they are thus left and given up by God: Several Things I named which they alledg as the ground of their *Fear*, which yet will not prove that God hath forsaken 'em: At the same time there are many other Things that will evidence the Contrary.

It remains therefore, that I may faithfully give every one his portion, Comfort to whom Comfort, and Terrour to whom Terrour is due; That I also speak to the Case of *Such* whose Guilt may quickly infer this Terrible Judgment, or concerning whom we may fear, whether they be not already under it, or left of God. There are several things with relation to this Case, which ought to be Considered.

1. THE First dangerous Symptom is *Security*, or a False, ungrounded Peace of Conscience. This is frequently the Prologue, and Forerunner of

of Judicial hardning. It is often a part of it, and an Evidence of it. Their Case therefore is exceeding dangerous, with whom *Conscience* is *Asleep*, or *Feared*. When that sin which formerly thy Conscience would reprove thee for, thou canst now commit without Remorse, or Difficulty: When such, or such a Lust can be freely indulged, and thy Heart not reproach thee, thy Conscience not fly in thy Face, or speak with any smartness, and Authority against it, as formerly it was wont to do: When the Neglect of such or such Duties, was a daily Trouble to thee heretofore, but now thou canst let *Them alone*, and thy Conscience will let *Thee alone*, without rebuking thee, or calling thee to Repentance, as it was wont to do: Or if Conscience do speak, it is with much Faintness, without any such Impressions of Fear, and Shame, and Sorrow, as were wont to be produced by it: This speaks as if God had already given thee up in some degree, or thou art very near what is worse, in very great danger of this dreadful Judgment.

This *Security* and *Quiet*, notwithstanding the neglect of known Duty,

and the Commission of sin, I grant has it's *Degrees*. There are some Degrees of it, into which a good Man, through the Prevalency of sin and Temptation, for a time may fall. Particularly as to the Duty of *Prayer*, and the spiritual Performance of it. But then such Persons, supposing them Upright in the main, who are under such Backslidings, are far from approving themselves in this Case, or from having any setled Peace. They have many an unpleasing Thought about their own Case, many Resolutions of Repentance, that they may be Recovered. They often say within themselves, *We will go and return to our first Husband, for then it was better with us than now*; And every Providence of God, whether of Mercy or Affliction, they regard, as a Call from Heaven to awaken them. And if the Word preached come home to their particular Case, they receive the Warning, and do not reject it, or oppose it.

But the Persons I speak of, as in danger of this Judgment, are such, especially who are *Secure*, and *Quiet* under the Guilt of great Transgressions unrepented of, and under the continued Omission

Omission of plain Duties. They are loſt as to any ſenſe of Sin, and they approve themſelves ſo far in their wretched Courſe, as to ſpeak Peace to themſelves, notwithſtanding the repeated and loud Calls, and Warnings of God to repentance.

Conſcience did formerly ſpeak, but they have ſo long checked, and ſtifled, and diſcouraged, and ſilenced the Voice of Conſcience, as to have loſt one of the greateſt Bleſſings in the World, *viz. Tenderneſs of Conſcience.* They have either ſilenc'd their Conſcience by main Force, or they have diſheartened it by a ſlighting, diſobedient Carriage; or bribed it by a Form of Godlineſs, an empty barren Profeſſion: And ſo it gives way to a deluſive deſtructive Peace, either to flatter them in the way to Hell, or not truly to inform them of their danger of it.

Such perſons little Apprehend the danger they are in. For it is much better to have an Awakened Conſcience, that roars againſt thee, than a Sleepy, ſilent Conſcience, that doth not reprove thee. It is better thy Conſcience ſhould *not ſpeak a good word*

to

to thee; than, how great cause soever there be, that it should speak *nothing but good*. That Conscience should speak *Peace*, when God by his Word speaks *Terrour*, is dreadful in it self, and more so, as to what it signifies, and has a tendency to.

Neither is such a Spirit of Slumber and Security only dangerous, as to the Persons themselves, in regard of the State of their own Souls; But these spiritual Judgments, where they prevail as to great numbers of Professing Christians, (as it is observed by many,) are usually followed with some terrible strokes of Temporal Judgment too. For as the first and greatest part of the Deliverance of the Church is *Spiritual*, by the pouring out of the Divine spirit; and the Recovery of the Life and Power of serious Religion, and the more plentiful success of the Gospel Ministrations; and this makes way for publick National Blessings, even those of another kind, and is usually attended with them: So the first Entrance into publick National Judgments, as to *Temporals*, is by spiritual Judgments, on the Body of the People. The abounding

ing of such spiritual Judgments, as we are now speaking of, opens the Door to temporal Calamities, and is the usual Forerunner of the most terrible ones, even of that kind.

So it was with the old World, so with the Jewish Nation before their Destruction by the Romans, And so, says *Salvian*, was it with the *African Churches* before the Inundation of the *Goths* and *Vandals*; And the like in later Instances, I believe, among our Neighbours. I wish there be no *moral Prognostications* of a Day of Evil on this Nation upon the same Account. We ought to apprehend the danger of such a thing, We may on these moral grounds very well fear it.

But it is the Case of *Particular Persons* I have now before me: And the more Security and false Peace of Conscience any have under great Guilt unrepented of, or known Duty continually neglected, the nearer do any such approach to the danger of being given up of God to their own Hearts Lusts: If they are not already entered into that dismal State. And yet how many such bless themselves in their Hearts, and please themselves, that they

they are now free from the Fears of Hell: They do not trouble themselves about the State of their Souls, as others do, and as they formerly did: They have few or no sad, and serious Thoughts, what shall become of them in the Everlasting World. Of all Others, these are *neareſt* to such a Judgment as that in the Text: For *when they ſay Peace and Safety, ſudden Deſtruction ſhall overtake them as Travel on a Woman with Child*, 1. *Theſſ.* 5. 3. They now ſpeak *Peace* to themſelves, but the next Day or Hour, they may know and feel the Truth of the divine Threatening, That *there is no Peace to the wicked*. There are an hundred threatnings in the Book of God againſt ſuch, and not one Promiſe of ſafety for one Hour: And yet they can lye down, and riſe, and go up and down Securely. They are not afraid when they lye down to ſleep, that they ſhall awake in Hell before the next Morning. They are not afraid when they ariſe and go abroad in the Morning, leſt the Wrath of God ſhould overtake them before Night. Read the deſcription of their ſin and Danger in that terrible paſſage, *Deut.* 29. 18, 20.

II. ANO-

II. ANOTHER Symptom of this Judgment, or dangerous Approach unto it, is when the Miniſtry of the Word, and Goſpel of Chriſt becomes a taſtleſs, inſipid, ineffectual thing; not attended with any ſuch ſpiritual Impreſſions as formerly. Heretofore you hardly heard a Sermon without ſome Convictions of ſin, and Reſolutions againſt it; the Word was quick and powerful, to give an humbling ſenſe of ſin, and to excite your Reſolutions to ſet upon neglected Duties; but now there is no ſuch thing. Yea, further, it may be the very external Worſhip of the Goſpel, the Ordinances and Inſtitutions of it, the Diſpencers of them, and they that value and Miud theſe things, are now ſcorned and reviled by you; For this is the Caſe of ſome Backſliders, after great Pretences, and an high Profeſſion.

In ſuch a Caſe you will find your ſpiritual Appetite to the Food of your Souls, (which conſiſts in *Deſires after the ſincere Milk of the word that you may grow thereby*,) to be much abated and loſt; and that Spiritual Savour and Reliſh in the Food of your Souls, which followed thoſe Deſires, is loſt

too. Your Preparations, Desires, and Designs in coming to such Institutions, are otherwise than formerly. Though upon some Considerations you have not thought fit to abandon the publick Worship, yet you have no such Appetite or Taste, no such Desires, and no such Relish, as to these things, as formerly you had. Neither do you of late experience any of those excellent Effects, which the Dispensation of the Gospel is designed to produce upon the Minds, and Consciences, and Lives of Men. Though there is difference in the degree of these Declensions, yet this is the high Road to Obduration, Hardness of Heart, and final Impenitence. And therefore, to use the Words of a learned Person concerning such Apostates, * 'The Calls 'of God unto such Backsliders in heart, 'for a return by Repentance, are 'multiplied, and the Reasons of it are 'innumerable; and without it, it is 'certain, that they shall perish Eter-'nally, and they know not how soon 'they may be overtaken with that 'Destruction, *Prov.* 29. 1. *He that be-*

* *Dr. Owen, Dominion of sin and Grace, p.* 89.

'ing

'ing often reproved, hardens his Heart, 'shall suddenly be destroyed, and that 'without Remedy.

If Men once come to this, that under the most searching, lively Sermons, they can continue secure, and wilful in known sins; they may fear lest they be left to go further; even to the hating of Godliness, and good Men; Or at least to be so far stupified, as not to feel any thing of the force of Gods Terrors, or the sweetness of his Promises; but to make a Jest of sin, and think a Life of Godliness a needless thing. Such Persons, when it comes to this, especially if they grow old in this Course, have Cause to fear lest they be forsaken of God, and given over to their own Hearts Lusts, sealed up under Judicial Blindness, and Hardness of Heart.

III. WHEN The Spirit of Grace gives over striving with the Souls of Men. This is a most dangerous Case: For except He return, they are irrecoverably lost. There is an absolute necessity of the Influence of the Divine Spirit to the Begining, Progress, and Continuance of the Spiritual Life; and

and there is no Opposition in the Soul, but this Spirit of Life and Power can overcome. But when he gives over striving with men, how deplorable must their Case be! And this he doth with many, after they have resisted the Spirit, and rebelled against the Spirit, and vexed the Holy Spirit of God, as we read of some that did, *Acts* 7. 51. Now if this blessed Spirit move not upon the Soul of *a Backslider*, he can never be recovered. And when he hath often been repulsed, and grieved, and quenched, he may withdraw in Anger; and God may justly resolve, as concerning the old World, that his Spirit shall strive no more, no longer with them.

Especially when, after a great Profession of Christianity, men turn Apostates, and despise Preaching, and the other Institutions of the Gospel, having *done despite to the Spirit of Grace*, *Heb.* 10. 29. Which, though spoken of open, final Apostates, should make Others that approach thereto to tremble. *And of how much sorer Punishment shall such be thought guilty*, that do thus Despight to the Spirit of Christ, who bears Witness to his Person

ſon and Doctrine! Who can tell the Dreadfulneſs and Horrour of their Puniſhment? The Conſtitution of the Law of *Moſes* reached but to a temporal Death without mercy: But beſides temporal Judgments, ſuch a Guilt will expoſe them to Eternal Wrath; For the greateſt ſin will have the greateſt Puniſhment.

No wonder then if the Holy Spirit ſtrive no more with Perſons that come under this tremendous Guilt, that ſin againſt the Holy Spirit, even as *a Spirit of Grace*; doing Deſpight to the Spirit of Grace, who did invite, and wooe, and draw them unto Chriſt, to bring them under the Bond of the Covenant. *My Spirit ſhall not alway ſtrive with men*, *Gen.* 6. 3 *Heb.* 3. 13. *Luke* 13. 7. When the Spirit of Grace, and Love, and Benignity, hath ſhone in upon their Minds, and often touched their Conſciences; and ſecretly whiſpered, *Sinner*, Wilt thou not yet turn? What, haſt thou no Inclinations to return to me? O do not go on and periſh, &c. Now to deſpight this very Spirit of Grace, muſt needs be attended with great Aggra-

vations of Guilt, becauſe it is after ſome Experience of his Influence and Power. This muſt be one of the moſt dangerous Symptoms of a periſhing loſt Condition: The Goſpel muſt needs be hid unto ſuch, becauſe, without the Light and Influence of the Holy Spirit, it can have no ſaving Effect. *If our Goſpel be hid, ſays* our Apoſtle, *it is hid to them that are loſt*, 2 Cor. 4. 3. *Whoſe Minds are blinded by Satan, leſt the Light of the glorious Goſpel of Chriſt ſhould ſhine into their Hearts.*

Though I muſt here add, that no Man, I believe, can determine, what Degree of this Guilt, as to particular Perſons, doth diſtinguiſh thoſe who are *Irrecoverably loſt*, from ſuch as are *Recoverable*, and may be called to Repentance.

IV. THOUGH The Spirit have not done ſtriving; yet when the preaching of the Word, though you cannot reſiſt the Light of divine Truth, but ſomewhat of it ſhines into the Mind and Conſcience; if yet *your Hearts* ſtand out, and will not yield, this is a dangerous Caſe. For men may

may be convinced by the Word, of the ſinfulneſs and Danger of their Condition; they may come to determine and to pronounce Judgment upon themſelves, that what God requires of them is but Juſt and equal, and that hitherto they have not complied with his Call. One thing or other, from day to day, hath hindered them from coming up to the terms of the Goſpel, from a covenant Cloſure with the Son of God upon the Goſpel Call: They may ſay, and own it before God and Men, 'That 'they are deeply convinced ſuch a 'thing ought to be done; But I have 'not yet found the time, or the Lei'ſure, or the Heart, to retire into a 'Cloſet, and conſider it, and ſet about 'it in good earneſt, and give up my 'Soul to him; I am convinced I muſt 'do it, or I cannot enter into Heaven; 'I am convinced I muſt turn, or I 'ſhall dye; I am ſatisfied this my pre'ſent Courſe muſt iſſue in my Ruine, 'my Eternal Ruine; that if I go on 'and dye in this Caſe, I am loſt for ever. But yet, notwithſtnnding ſuch Convictions, with many, ſtill *the Heart* holds out againſt all that can be ſaid.

The higheſt and the moſt important matters that can be named, though propounded with the cleareſt Evidence, and repreſented as of the neareſt Concern to them, yet do not effectually prevail with them. Though we propoſe, in the Name of God, the Incouragment of that Bleſſedneſs, and Priviledge, which no man, that underſtands and believes, but muſt deſire; Though we flaſh the Fire of Hell before them, and endeavour by the Terrors of the Lord to perſwade them; yet they have heard of theſe things ſo often, that they are not moved by them to yield themſelves to the Lord. All that we ſpeak in the Name of Chriſt is as a Tale that is told, they have heard it ſo often it makes little Impreſſion: Things are come to that ſad paſs with them, and they are Sermon-proof to that Degree, that (to uſe the words of a Great man,) unleſs we could ſpeak of greater things than *Heaven* and *Hell*, we cannot move them. And though their Minds are inlightened, and ſome Convictions begun; yet their Luſts carry the Day againſt their Convictions: Conſcience is baffled, or

or kept under by the Power of vicious Inclinations.

And while men go on at this rate, who can tell but God may ſay, *Let them alone?* but that he may give them up to thoſe Luſts they have choſen, and ſo their Condition be deſperate: Though they themſelves do not apprehend it to be ſo? And as to individual Perſons we cannot diſtinctly tell when it is ſo; but ſo *it may be*, and God be clear in his Righteouſneſs herein: becauſe it is penal, and after great Provocations, and it was lately otherwiſe with them: But they ſinned away their Mercy, and outſtood their Day. There was a time when he would have been found of them, but now he will not. *O that thou hadſt known in this thy day the things that* belong unto thy Peace! *Now they are hid from thine Eyes*: A little while ago they were not.

But to prevent miſtake, Remember, that though the Spirit retiring from ſuch, does infer their Day of Grace to be paſt, *if he return not*; and for ought you can tell, *he never may*; yet he doth not Darken their Minds by putting any ill thoughts into them, or any

ill Diſpoſition of Mind. God retires, and the Spirit leaves you, after you have provoked him, and ſo you are loſt. He only ſays, 'This wretched 'Creature will not be prevailed with, 'he perſiſts in a careleſs Neglect of me, 'and my Son and Spirit; we will 'leave him, and let him alone to his 'own Luſts, to walk in his own Coun-'ſels. *O dreadful Doom!* how ſhould the Danger of it ſtartle us!

V. THERE are Others, whoſe Caſe is exceeding dangerous, who, after ſome trial in the ways of God, for want of that ſenſible Joy and Comfort which they expected, grow weary of them, and leave them off. They were formerly diligent, and conſtant in the outward performance of ſuch and ſuch Duties of Worſhip, in publick and private; but now have laid them aſide. Some of theſe, I believe, have now and then a ſentence of Condemnation within themſelves, but Others are hardened paſt feeling. They tried a while, and began hopefully, and made a little Progreſs; But their Convictions did not preſently end in peace of Conſcience, they did not

not presently meet with that comfortable settlement, and Establishment which they hoped for; either through their own Ignorance, or want of Advice, and Counsel concerning the state of their Souls, or from the Power of Temptation, &c. But not finding *such* Peace and Joy as they expected, or *so soon*, they give over, and go back to their wonted Course of sin, and Neglect of God.

This is the Case of many convinced *in their Youth*. They follow the Tendency of that for some time, they hope for a good Issue, and that their Trouble of Soul will be quickly over: They pray and read, and confess sin, and mourn for it, &c. But find not presently the Peace they expected, they find their Lusts to strive and stir still, and sin and *Satan* not to be overcome, and it may be some Corruptions are more strong than formerly, or they are more sensible of their strength, and Acting: Hereupon the Devil suggests to them matter of Discouragment, and their own Hearts are ready to make them say, in a timorous Despondency of Spirit, 'I see 'I am entered into a melancholy

'course of Life; I see no end of these 'Troubles, I fear I shall never attain 'to Peace as long as I hearken to my 'Conscience: If I thus let every sin 'trouble me, I shall never have a days 'Quiet: If I am thus nice, and scru-'pulous, and tender about sin and Du-'ty, I shall never while I live get out of 'these Perplexities. Therefore I will 'even cast all off, I will give my self 'more Liberty, and hearken to my 'Conscience no longer; I will take 'my Pleasure as I see others do, and 'not wait any longer for those Plea-'sures of another kind, which I was 'told of, but despair of attaining. I 'give up all for lost, as to any of these 'things, I shall never reach them; 'therefore I will do as well as I can 'for the present; I will drive away 'my melancholy Thoughts by Com-'pany, and Wine, and Mirth, &c.

Hereupon such Persons come in a little while to dislike all such Books, and Preaching as would revive their Convictions, and to avoid the very Company of those who knew any thing of the state of their Souls, while under Conviction, and are like to speak to them about it. That Mini-

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stry that will not let them alone, and suffer them to be quiet in the Enjoyment of their Lusts, they cannot relish; and in a little while they care for none at all; unless their Credit, and Reputation, or Temporal Interest, or some such Motive, ingage them to attend it. Or else they cure themselves by some false Doctrines, that put an end to their Convictions, and make them easily perswade themselves that they are *Elected*, and that *Christ is theirs*, and their *Sins* are *pardoned*, or were *so* from all Eternity, &c. But this is a hazardous and dreadful Case, when Persons arrive to this pitch, they had need look about them, and Return quickly, lest God should give them over.

VI. WHEN men continue in sin, and put off their Repentance and Turning to God, with this Thought and Intention, that *they will some time or other Repent*, and turn to God, but *not yet*. One can hardly tell, whether the provoking *Guilt*, and *Danger* of such a Case, be greater than the horrid *Absurdity* of it. And yet this is a Delusion that has ruined Thousands, and made ample

ample Harvests for the Devil. They have some Tremblings under the Word, as *Felix* when the Apostle discoursed of Righteousness, and Temperance, and Judgment to come; But *the convenient time* for their complying with their Convictions, and performing their good Resolutions, is not come, but they intend it, they resolve it.

I would fain ask such Persons, that now continue in known sin, unreconciled to God, who yet *intend to Repent*; whether they indeed think that God *will Accept*, and forgive them when they do Repent, or that he *will not?* If they say, as doubtless they will, We think and hope *he will* forgive us, and whenever we truly Repent, he has promised to receive us. Yet,

1. IS it not then the basest, and the most horrid Ingratitude that can be, to continue longer to abuse the Grace of God, to affront him, and rebel against him, and delay your Return to him, with this Thought? Dare you say to the God of all Grace, who has born with you so long, 'Lord, I 'have dishonoured thy Name for so 'many years, I have slighted thy Au-'thority, I have disobeyed thy Calls, 'I have refused thy Grace, I have ex-

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'posed my self to thy righteous Anger all my Life hitherto; O let me 'alone to do so *thus much longer*, and 'then I will Repent, then I will ask thee 'forgiveness. How ungrateful, how absurd is such a Speech!

2. WILL Not the same Argument that keeps thee from Repenting now, be as strong hereafter? For after all the little objections against Repenting, and Reforming at present; the only one at the bottom is, *because it is Present*; and that will still hold: So that your Turning to God will be as improbable at any time hereafter, as now.

It ought to be very well considered in this Case, That whoever continues in sin with this Thought, and Design of *Repenting hereafter*; the Devil is sure to prosper in any Attempt against that Man. For when that time comes to be *present*, unto which he has adjourned his intended Repentance, the Argument will be *as strong* against repenting *then*, as it is for delaying *now*. He will then adjourn it to some distance season.

3. DO You know what *Repentance* is, that you will venture upon sin with a Design to Repent? That is, that you will continue to do that, which you

you resolve and intend, to wish you had never done; to be heartily sorry that you were such Fools as to do it. You resolve to do that, which you resolve to be ashamed of, and to loath your selves for, and would give all the World, if it were in your Power, that you had not done it: For this is implied in *Repentance*. Now is it becoming the Wisdom, and Reason of a Man, thus to act?

4. A R T Thou sure to live to that time, unto which thou delayest thy Repentance, and Turning to God? With how many every week is that the Case, who intend to Repent, *some time* or *other*, but dye before the time comes?

VI. W H A T If God should give thee over to thine own Hearts Lusts? May he not justly leave thee to the hardness of thine impenitent Heart? Doth not such a Carriage of thine deserve it? If thou wilt go on from Month to Month, from year to year, in the neglect of known Duties, under the Convictions of Conscience, that thou art not yet turned to God, or reconciled to him; thou wilt, *I say*, yet go on, and

and continue as thou art, though thy Heart tell thee, if thou dye in this Condition thou muſt periſh; and thou haſt nothing to relieve thee in this ſad Caſe, but only an Intention *to Repent ſome time hereafter*: O how Juſtly may God deny that Grace to *Thee*, which thou haſt ſo long abuſed, and forfeited, and wilt not now Accept! How righteouſly mayſt thou be ſealed up to Deſtruction, by Gods forſaking of thee!

VII. THERE is another ſort, whoſe Caſe is exceeding dangerous, *viz.* Who often fall into the ſame ſins, which they Repent of, and are ſorry for. After they have ſinned, they Repent of thoſe ſins again; and after ſome Repentance, they commit the ſame ſins again; and ſo have the Aggravations of ſinning againſt Knowledge. Now *to him that knoweth to do good, and doth it not*; that knoweth what is evil, and forbears it not, *to him it is ſin* with a Witneſs, *Jam.* 4. 7. *He that knew his Maſters Will, and did it not, ſhall be beaten with many ſtripes, Luk.* 12. 49.

It is a dreadful passage, though spoken of Apostates from the Profession of Christianity unto Judaism or Heathenism, *Heb.* 10 26, 27, 28, 29. That *such as sin after the Knowledge of the Truth, there remains no more sacrifice for such sins.* For what further Guilt may not such sins against Knowledge bring them to, and issue in? Doubtless the more you know, and have considered the Issue and Consequence of such sins, (as by renewing your Repentance is implied, that something of this kind has been done;) the more aggravated is your Sin afterward, and the more dangerous your Case. And the more struggle and striving there has been of Conscience against Corruption; and yet thy Lusts have carried the day and got the victory over Conscience; The more Vows and Promises of Amendment that you have made, and broken, and sinned against; repenting of your Repentance, as *Pharaoh* did; the greater is your sin and Danger: The more Warnings you have had of God by his Providence, and the more awakening Calls of his Word, and yet you continue this Course of sinning, and repenting, of repenting,

and

and ſinning ſtill; the more dangerous is your Caſe. Eſpecially under a profeſſion of Religion. For in a little time Conſcience thus affronted is like enough to be hardened, and *to be ſeared as with an hot Iron*, 2 *Theſſ* 2. 12. And God may give you up to an impenitent Heart, leaving you to commit the groſſeſt Abominations, without ſhame or Remorſe, as he did the Gentiles, *Rom* 1. 21, 24, 26, 28.

If ſuch be ever awakened to Repentance in this World, this very Conſideration will pierce them to the Heart; this will make them ready to deſpair; That, as the Apoſtle ſaid of himſelf, *I did it ignorantly, therefore I obtained Mercy*; They will be ready to cry out againſt themſelves, I did ſo and ſo, but it was *againſt Knowledge*, therefore there is *no Mercy* for me. There remains for ſuch, without Repentance a moſt fearful Puniſhment, And a fearful looking for, and Expectation of ſuch Puniſhment, in the Conſciences of thoſe who have ſinned at this rate. And there be very Few of thoſe who have lived long under the preaching of the Word, and continued to ſin thus againſt Knowledge, and Conſcience till

till they were old; *very few such* are recovered to Repentance. Certainly the greater the *Knowledge* is you sin against, the more you provoke God to give you up to a reprobate Mind, and to leave you to hardness of Heart.

VIII. WHEN, Notwithstanding the Profession of Religion, and outward Attendance on the Duties of it, yet sin has the Dominion and Mastery in the Soul; and sensual Inclinations are indulged without restraint, even as to gross and notorious sins. There are some Backsliders, who would formerly have started back at such or such a Temptation, who can now boldly enter into it, readily yield, and are easily overcome, without Concern or struggle. Sin has the Mastery and Dominion in the Soul, they go on to commit it without Check or Fear. They consent to its Rule, they are willing subjects: For *to whom you yield your Servants to obey, his Servants ye are, Rom. 6. 6.* And that victory which Sin hath got by your own Consent, may justly, as it commonly doth in the Event, bring that Bondage and Slavery

very under ſin, which is *Judicial*, and *Penal*: That ſlavery to ſin which at firſt was *voluntary*, afterwards becomes *unavoidable*. You are held in the Chains of your own ſins, you are captivated and ovrecome by your own luſts. *While they promiſe themſelves Liberty*, ſays the Apoſtle, *they are the Servants of Corruption: for of whom a Man is overcome, of the ſame is he brought into Bondage*, 2. Pet. 2. 19.

There is leſs hope of ſuch Men that are grown looſe and ſenſual, after they have been forward Profeſſors: And they are harder to be recovered than any others. For they are more likely to be left of God. Some have unwarily ſaid', that an open profligate debauched Perſon is *nearer* the Grace of God and ſalvation by Chriſt, than *a moral honeſt Man*, that is kept from the groſſer Pollutions of the World. But ſuch Expreſſions ſhould not make us think, that God will invite and wooe us the more earneſtly, the further our ſins have divorced us from him. * It is true, the Holy Ghoſt can cleanſe and adorn, and prepare himſelf a room

* *Dr.* Hammonds *Sermons*, p. 275.

in any Heart, and soften it, and not be repulsed by the most habituate sin, or Devil. And some have been thus snatched like fire-brands out of the Fire, and changed from incarnate Devils to incarnate Saints. Yet those extraordinary and rare Examples must not be thought a Rule. Therefore in ordinary charitable Reason, we ought to Judge more hopefully of those Men, who have not run into the grossest sensualities, and Corruptions of the World; of such especially, who by any common Influence of the Spirit, with the Word, have been kept back from great Transgressions; so that by the Knowledge of Christ, they have escaped the Pollutions of the World; and by the Advantage of their Education, and common Grace, and Providence, have been restrained from foul Miscarriages. If such as these do afterwards become profane, and loose, and sensual, and grosly carnal; it is said of them, *their latter End is like to be worse than their Beginning, And it had been better for them not to have known the Way of Righteousness, than, after having known it, to turn from the holy Commandments.*

That some Men may sin themselves

ſelves into a ſtate of *Incurable Impenitence*, is very plain from Scripture. Your neglect and Provocations may put Chriſt to his Irreverſible Oath, and make him ſwear as he once did, that *you ſhall not enter into his* Reſt, *Heb.* 3. 11. And that this is of force in the times of the Goſpel, is more than intimated, *v.* 12. Exhorting profeſſing Chriſtians at that time, to beware of *an Evil heart of Unbelief*, from the Example of the *Iſraelites*. That Terrible place, *Iſa. 6. 9.* Is quoted no leſs than *ſix times* in the New Taſtament, as if it belonged to them, who ſit under Goſpel Light.

As to that difficult paſſage, *Heb. 6. 4, 5.* Concerning thoſe *who had been made Partakers of the Holy Ghoſt, and taſted of the good Word of God, and of the Powers of the World to come, and yet did fall away*; it is ſaid, *it is impoſſible to renew them again.* In the ordinary way it is not to be expected. Though that Paſſage do eſpecially reſpect ſuch Apoſtates as openly renounced Chriſtianity, crucifying the Son of God afreſh: Yet ſuch as, after a plauſible Profeſſion, turn to a looſe and notoriouſly wicked Life, whether they keep

that Profeſſion ſtill, or abandon it, they are greatly in danger of the like Judgment. *For the Earth that drinks in the Rain that often comes upon it, and yet brings forth nothing but Briars, is rejected, and is nigh unto Curſing, whoſe end is to be burned*, as it there follows, 7, 8. *V.* Their Caſe is next to hopeleſs and deſperate. And what reaſon have all Backſliders to fear, leſt they ſin themſelves into ſuch a diſmal ſtate.

Uſe 1. And let that be the firſt Improvement I would make of this Diſcourſe, To awaken *Apoſtates*, and *Backſliders* to Conſider their Danger. It may be you have gratified your Luſts, notwithſtanding the Light of Conſcience, and the Motions of the Spirit; Now, it may be, you can ſin with leſs Regret, and don't feel the Wounds you give your ſelves by your Tranſgreſſions? Can you ſay but that the Bleſſed Spirit is retired in great meaſure already? And is it any Wonder after ſo many ſtruggles and Conflicts, if he ſhould for ever Retire, and leave you to the full uncontroulable Dominion of your own Luſts? If he ſhould ſay, *he that is filthy, let him be filthy ſtill; becauſe you would not be purged, you*

you shall not be purged, till I make my Fury to rest upon you.

Awake therefore, and consider your Danger. You that find any of these things agree to your own Case, beware lest you be in the Number of those *that draw back unto Perdition*, in whom *God says his Soul can take no Pleasure*, *Heb.* 10. 38. *Take no Pleasure*, that is, whom he loaths, and detests. Were we not under some great Declension, some sad degree of Hardness of Heart our selves; how should we pity the Case of all such Persons who are near this Judgment? With what hearty Concern for them, should we endeavour their Recovery, did we know better, and believingly consider more, what it is to be left of God, and given over! With what hearty Grief should I mourn over such Persons! With what Groans, and Tears of Compassion should I warn them, and try to awaken them, if my own Heart were not under somwhat of *this Hardness*, which they are like to be totally given up unto!

I confess, at first, I was loth to preach, or publish these things, lest I should drive some *to Despair*. But upon more

ſerious Conſideration, I do not think that the Generality of People are ſo very apt to *Deſpair*. They have ten thouſand ways to *flatter* themſelves, and *they will hope* for the moſt part, in deſpight of all Arguments to the Contrary. In all the Scripture there is but *one Example* of a deſpairing Man, and that was *Judas*; Who did not deſpair by reaſon of any terrible Doctrine which was preached to him, but becauſe of the Load of his own foul ſin, and the Weakneſs and Puſillanimity of his own Spirit. But for *one* who deſpairs, O what *Multitudes* are there who live in ſin, and yet *Sibi ſuaviter benedicunt*, think themſelves in a good Condition, and that all is well; Though the Scriptures ſay, that the Righteous ſhall ſcarcely be ſaved, and that the Gate is ſtraight that leads to Life; yet every Body almoſt hopes to be ſaved, in the Courſe they are in, though it be the broad way.

YOU that are under any of theſe dangerous Symptoms that approach to ſuch a Judgment, take heed of Encouraging your ſelves in *a falſe Hope of Salvation*. Bethink your ſelves, apprehend your Danger, and awake to prevent

prevent the diſmal Iſſue. Make haſte, and eſcape for your Life, if yet there be Hope of your Recovery. It muſt be ſpeedy Repentance, *now*, while it is called to day, before the Maſter of the Houſe be gone, and *the Door ſhut*: For then *many ſhall ſeek to enter, and ſhall not be able*.. For ſo we read, *Luk.* 13. 24, 25, Verſes connected, without a full ſtop between them, as in our Tranſlation.

If you are not yet ſealed up, and given over, (as the Motions of the Spirit yet ſtriving with you, and ſome Concernedneſs about your own Caſe, is a good Argument that you are not.) O awake, and call upon God! Remembering whence you are fallen, and repent preſently: For if you reſiſt, and refuſe *this Call* of God, you may never have *Another*, or never have *Grace* to hearken to another, and then the Iſſue will be the ſame.

I would hope, that none of thoſe to whom I now ſpeak are ſo *Loſt* but they may be *Recovered* (And I cannot think that any who reads this, is in ſo hopeleſs a Caſe, but he may find Mercy, if yet he will ſeek it.) *He has not ſinned the ſin unto Death, who is afraid leſt*

he be guilty of it You are not absolutely given over and forsaken of God, or sure that you shall finally be so, that this Spirit will no more return, though in some Degree you are forsaken; If you are brought to consider your Danger, and to resolve to use Means to prevent the fatal Issue: You are not finally left of God, whatever dangerous Approaches you have made to such a Judgment. In the Consideration therefore of your Danger, awake to use Gods appointed Means. And here,

1. I might advise, that you Watch carefully lest you enter into Temptation. 2. That you take heed of slight Thoughts of sin. 3. That you labour to have right Apprehensions concerning the Attributes of God, and the tenor of the New Covenant by Christ Jesus. 4. That you attend the Ministry of the Word, with a Desire and Design of some spiritual Advantage, suitable to your own Case. Take heed of being slight and careless in the use of those Means, that must cure a hard Heart, if ever it be cured. 5. In the use of all Means, look up to God for the Influence of the divine Spirit. Apprehend

prehend the Neceſſity of it, for the Cure of a hard or backſliding Heart. 6. Call your ſelves often to an Account how matters ſtand between God and you. 7. Ingage more heartily, ſeriouſly, and conſtantly in the uſe of ſecret Prayer. 8. Improve the ſickneſs and Death of others, as Warnings to awaken the Thoughts of your own. 9. In any Doubt and Difficulty of Conſcience, (eſpecially under Temptations to Deſpair,) do not ſcrûple to open your Caſe to ſome faithful Miniſter of Chriſt, that may enlighten and and guide you. 10. Labour to underſtand diſtinctly what that *Repentance towards God is*, and that *Faith in our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, which are the ſtated Terms of Life, and the Condition of the new Covenant. And never give over the uſe of Means, till you are brought to Repent of all your ſins againſt God, and truly to believe in Jeſus Chriſt with all your Heart; evidencing your unfeigned Faith by new Obedience. Therefore take heed by what *Marks* and *Signs* you Judge your ſelves, leſt all your Soul Trouble ſhould end in a falſe Peace.

I connot conclude without repeating

ing the Admonition against that *false Peace*, which one great Work of our Ministry is to destroy. For there are Multitdes of People who pretend to love God, and to love good Men, and to trust in Christ that he dyed for them, and to rely on Christ, and to cast themselves on Christ, and think they believe on him, and that they shall be saved. Who will tell you that as for Obedience, they mind it as they can, though they be not as good as others; their *Hearts* are good, and they mean well, and they know their own Hearts better than Ministers do: they are sure they believe in Christ; and they will conclude that all is well, &c. Tho 'tis notorious of *Many such*, that they are Ignorant of God, and strangers to Christ, and live in the common allowed practice of great sins. Yet they will thus *Hope well* of themselves, and speak Peace to themselves.

NO Wonder if they do so *now*, when even at the Day of Judgment some are brought in disputing with Christ, till the Heart of their Hopes be broken by his condemning Sentence. Not as if those that now dye in Impenitence and Unbelief, should not

not know, or believe that they shall perish for ever, till after the general Judgment. But matters seem there to be represented, as applied to the Persons of those who shall be found alive at the End of this World, or whose Eternal State in the next World is concluded, by what their Case is when they leave this state of salvation.

SEE Therefore that your *Hopes* be of a right Kind, grounded on Scripture Evidence, purifying the Heart, conquering the World, exciting thy Desires after Christ and Heaven, making thee to sin less, and to please and glorifie God more. Such an Hope you may hold fast, it will not make you ashamed. But of all things fear *a false Hope*. Dread it as you would the sin of *Despair*; yea as the most dangerous of the two, because more common. I mean not *a Despair* of the sufficiency and Willingness of Christ to pardon and save thee, if thou repent, and believe, and obey him; Nor a *Despair* of finding Mercy, if thou heartily seek it. But *despair* thou must of ever seeing God without Holiness. *Despair* that Christ will ever be the Author of eternal

eternal Salvation to any, but such as believe and obey him: *Despair* of escaping Eternal Death if thou live after the Flesh: *Despair* of entering into Heaven if thou wilt not seek it in the first place: *Despair* of escaping the Doom of perishing with the Ungodly, except you soundly Repent, except you turn to God, and Holiness, from sin and the World; except you penitently and thankfully accept of Christ, obey and follow him as your Lord and Saviour. *Despair* therefore of ever being saved in the state thou art in, with whom it is not thus.

GOD will ere long deal plainly with thee, and let thee know the Truth. And what will it avail thy perishing Soul, for Ministers to deceive, and flatter thee with vain *Hopes*; when, without Repentance and turning to God in Christ, there is none? Nay if any thing keep thee out of Heaven, (I speak of the Case of most ordinary Hearers, and Professors,) If any thing keep thee out of Heaven, it is *a false and groundless Hope* of coming thither.

CHRISTIANS, We must thus speak plain. Would you have

us

us be unfaithful to God and you: We must be accountable to God ere long, as well as you: We must stand before his Judgment seat as well as you. Why should we give you *Hopes*, if God do give you *none*? I therefore say it again, that, without speedy and sincere Repentance towards God, and Faith in Jesus Christ, evidenced by cordial faithful Obedience to him, there is no Hope, for any one of you. And they that hear often of these things, and will yet go on in sin; it is Just with God to leave them, and give them up to their own Hearts Lusts. Therefore cast away your Transgressions, return to the Lord with all your Hearts, and yield your selves to the Claim, and Call of Christ *without Delay*, while Mercy invites you, and Grace may be had, for *why will you Dye, O House of Israel?*

FINIS.

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